

THE TEAM

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Lifelong Learning Network

Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin



I'm delighted with the team we now have in place.

In May 2007 when I was appointed, the LLN was a very lonely world but the work has started to gather momentum and exciting developments are taking place.

Here you'll read about some of these developments and find out about the people working in the network.

I have always recognised the potential to make a real difference to opportunities available for vocational learners. FE Colleges are being encouraged to expand their HE provision, to focus on meeting the needs of employers and employees, involving them in the design and delivery of courses. The LLN is central to this. Although we have targets, the underpinning approach, central to the LLN's values, is one of improving life chances for adults and young people, to enhance their work based skills and knowledge, producing a more confident, capable workforce. I hope you enjoy our first newsletter. Please get in touch if you'd like to discuss a potential project, offer some specific expertise or simply find out what's going on.

Jill Ward
Director

HOW DOES THE LIFELONG LEARNING NETWORK WORK?

The Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Lifelong Learning Network is a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funded initiative providing a framework for collaborative working between a range of organisations including local universities and colleges. The remit of the Network is quite specific – to provide Higher Education (HE) vocational qualifications and progression routes for learners, into and through HE in a range of vocational sectors:

- **Technology**
- **Health and Care**
- **Creative and Media**
- **Public Sector**
- **IT, Enterprise, Leadership and Management**

LOGO COMPETITION WINNER

We recently launched a competition for students to design a logo for the Network. We had over 100 entries and the standard of work was very high.

I am pleased to say that the competition was won by Arron Bostock, currently in his first year of his Foundation Degree in Graphic and Digital Design at Newcastle-under-Lyme College.

The design has evolved into our new logo and we are delighted with the response from partners and stakeholders. We hope you like it too!

14 – 19 DIPLOMAS AND PROGRESSION AGREEMENTS

One of the first important areas of work for the Network has been in ensuring that the new diplomas have the full endorsement of the universities within the Network area. **Keele, Wolverhampton, and Staffordshire universities, and Harper Adams University College** are all able to announce their endorsement of diplomas and from 2008 learners undertaking Level 3 Diploma pathways will have the same progression opportunities as learners undertaking other types of level 3 provision.

As a further development of this endorsement the universities within the Network will be working to define more clearly for learners (and teachers and parents advising and supporting them) where necessary, what specific additional/specialist learning may be required to fulfil the entry requirements to certain awards and courses.

EXTENDING VOCATIONAL CHOICE FOR LEARNERS

Over 60 learners attended a Higher Education Fair at Leek College on Saturday January 26th. The event was organised by the Open University and Leek College and sponsored by the LLN.

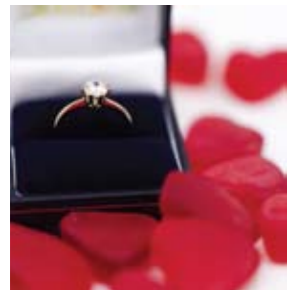
Learners were recruited to OU 'Openings' and Short courses and to Foundation Degrees at Leek College. Also on offer, and popular, was a bridging programme which helps to prepare vocational learners at NVQ 3 and 4 for degree level study. The OU, Leek and Ludlow colleges are also working on extra face to face study support for OU Openings students to assist their progression into HE programmes. Learners for the HE Fair came from Leek, Buxton, Stafford and Stoke. The event was part of a wider project in which the Open University through the LLN is working with rural colleges to open up choice of learning modes and subjects of study for local, work based learners.

We have held two development days with Leek College (at Leek and in Birmingham) and are working with Ludlow College on training and educational progression in the Shropshire Care sector. Duration of the project is September 2007 to October 2008. Project coordinator is Colin Appleby at the Open University West Midlands.

ARE YOU ENGAGED?

We hope you had a great Valentine's day! Our proposal is that you engage with the Lifelong Learning Network by taking part in our Stakeholders meetings, Employer Forums, theme groups or events.

Our next big event, working with Aim Higher and the Staffordshire Partnership is the "Keeping up with the Joneses" Employer and Education conference, 9th April 2008.



Aimhigher...

This half-day conference will bring together representatives from education and training providers, Further and Higher Education, Learning and Sector Skills Councils and employers to:

- Hear about the national and local skills agenda;
- Hear about new initiatives to meet local education and training demands;
- Explore how to improve local partnership working between business, education institutions, training providers and other agencies.
- Gain a better understanding of:
 - The role of 14-19 reform in up-skilling the future workforce
 - The role of the Lifelong Learning Network
 - The role of the new Diplomas in meeting the skills agenda
 - The role of the Learning and Sector Skills Councils

If you are interested in any of the events or development projects we are working on, have ideas for developing new HE awards or have employees who wish to engage with HE please call **Clare Keegan** on **01785 353665**.

E portfolios

An exciting initiative involving three Further Education Colleges and Wolverhampton University is now planned to develop e portfolios for students to take with them through their Further Education experience and into Higher Education.

The project is planned to work specifically with art media and design students. The advantages of e portfolios are that they enable students not only to keep together the essential information they need such as their CV or exam results but also to include reflective learning experiences and work they have completed. This is particularly interesting with art media and design students as they will be able to transport their work easily and extensively through this media. The added advantage is that if students are able to carry a portfolio with them across different educational sectors and eventually it is hoped into the workplace, this will seamlessly cross barriers currently in place.

RESEARCH AND DATA

The team is setting up a number of research and data gathering projects. Amelia Rout, the Research Officer, is planning work around each of the thematic and discipline groups as well as a project around regional employers. Research has commenced on a project investigating learning and development in the care home sector in Shropshire. Additionally various projects are being discussed with external collaborators. This work is being supported by Louise Cope, the Data Information Officer.

Louise is currently providing background data on vocational learners up to level three across the network. This includes courses enrolled on, number of learners, existing qualifications and progression routes. She is also working on collecting data for a network wide employer database.

INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

The IAG Group has immediate priorities which include:

- The organisation of a number of subject-related vocational admissions staff development events to develop a constructive dialogue between HE Admissions tutors/staff and vocational tutors from colleges and training providers
- Research and map the availability of existing IAG progression resources for vocational and work-based learners and, if necessary, commission new resources
- Provide – in partnership with Aimhigher - a single point of access to relevant LLN IAG resources through the regional Learning Pathways website (ALPS) and work closely with partners to embed their use across the LLN
- Explore the demand for new IAG practitioner curriculum at HE level and if required, develop appropriate provision at partner institutions
- Building-on the work of Aimhigher and regional local authorities and working in partnership with Aimhigher, develop vocational/work-based versions of the HE CARD (Choose a Real Deal) progression programme appropriate to the LLN
- Provide a programme of learning support for CARD students in their first semester at partner HEIs
- Support the training and development of workplace IAG advisors (Union Learning Representatives)

To get involved in this group speak to David Round.

SECTOR FOCUS

Public Sector

The Public Sector & Public Services Discipline Group aims to address the needs of learners related to areas that will prepare them for a career within the Public Sector, or enhance learning within their existing career. The focus will be on areas such as local and regional Councils, Law, Regeneration.

The LLN has engaged with partner colleges such as Telford & Wrekin College of Arts & Technology (TCAT) and has instigated employer forums to consider the barriers for access into Higher Education across its geographical remit, and to address the needs identified.

The Public Sector & Public Services Discipline Group aims to facilitate a range of learning opportunities within its area, for example, foundation degree(s) in Public Sector and in Law and the accreditation of CPD on Equality & Diversity.

CREATIVE & MEDIA

The Creative & Media discipline covers a broad subject base that leads to a diverse range of careers (e.g. architect, fashion designer, graphic designer, animator, photographer, lighting technician) in an equally broad range of industries (e.g. music, drama, TV and broadcast, art and design, and journalism). The majority of employers are small to medium sized enterprises, and a good many individuals are self-employed. Key priorities are to establish networks that are doing and providing the right things in terms of progression routes, curriculum, qualifications and delivery modes, with a focus on employability and career progression.

The introduction of the diploma lines in the education of the 14-19 year age group and the introduction of foundation degrees with large elements of work-based learning at further and higher present both challenges and opportunities in terms of curriculum and progression routes. A project based upon mapping and gapping the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) that currently exists has recently been approved by the LLN which will provide a clear indication of IAG provision in terms of value, accessibility and relevance in a regional context, and indicate the extent of curriculum coverage and gaps that need to be filled.

Our ambition is to provide learners of all ages with readily available information on easily accessed, employment-relevant training and qualifications across the range of education providers, with clear articulation of placement and progression opportunities.

Cross Cutting Themes (CCT)

Leadership & Management, IT & Enterprise sit appropriately under the cross cutting themes banner as they, to some degree or other, impact upon and interact with the functioning of all the other discipline groups. As flexibility of learning is key to pathways through education, CCT is working collaboratively with FE colleges and HEIs to develop foundation degrees, post-graduate awards and CPD which will carry mutual recognition - in the hope of avoiding those brick walls which can be such a deterrent to education should you move job and/or location.

Much of the early work focuses on the needs of two employers in the region: the health sector and local authorities. However, by developing a series of core leadership and management modules which we believe can provide basic underpinning knowledge contextualised to the sector, we feel that the foundation can be set for a wide range of awards in other key areas identified for development: financial services; travel & tourism; operations & logistics, and generic leadership and management qualifications. With the 14-19 target group, progression and IAG are major issues. We are starting to work more closely with organisations already active within this sector to ensure that each understands the needs of the other and that we are mutually supportive.

HEALTH & CARE

Bob Dylan once said: "The times, they are a-changing". This has never been truer within health and social care than at the present time. While this provides employers, employees, patients and carers with many challenges it also opens up opportunities for the development of innovative roles and associated education within these sectors.

This is where the LLN can help by sharing best practice, identifying gaps in provision and providing development money for accredited education at higher education levels. For example in Health & Social Care the LLN supported Staffordshire University to develop three new awards in Mental Health. The aim of the awards is to help people who work in areas like the emergency services, youth and community work, to increase their knowledge and understanding of mental health. For further details please contact Sheri Rhodes-Martin, s.g.rhodes-martin@staffs.ac.uk. The recent employers' forum at Priorslee Hall, Telford was well attended. The focus of this meeting was Foundation Degrees and the importance of linking the development of new awards to the needs of the workplace. Foundation Degrees are work-based qualifications and cannot be developed in isolation. In discussion groups we were challenged to come up with ideas and activities that the LLN might undertake to encourage the uptake of Foundation Degrees: a report and action plan will follow.

If you would like to attend a future employer forum or discuss ideas for education that take vocational learners into and through higher education then please contact a.h.longbottom@staffs.ac.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.

TECHNOLOGY

The Technology Discipline covers many subject areas, but we currently work around the titles of Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Land Based, IT and are happy to take up any other Technology related themes. We're engaging with educational partners in our area, including FE and HE institutions and employers groups and working with organisations such as Sector Skills Councils, AimHigher, Connexions, Learning and Skills Council and other Government funded bodies. The main priorities for our work are to clarify progression routes for learners with vocational qualifications, and to make sure that these students have access to HE opportunities. In this way we aim not only to address the needs of learners, but also to provide employers with the skilled staff to meet the needs of the local economy.

Work in the Technology Discipline is providing some exciting opportunities for learners, with bids so far approved for new qualifications in NHS Health Informatics, Film Technology and Mechanical Engineering. All these bids aim to allow learners in the workplace to continue their studies, and should provide career related qualifications and progression. We look forward to following the progress of these bids and reporting back on learner experiences.

LLN funding can help with the development of vocational progression pathways, and we welcome enquiries from any interested parties, especially employers and educational providers. For further information please email, r.borup@lln@staffs.ac.uk