



Lifelong Learning Network
Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin

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Network News

The newsletter of the Lifelong Learning Network

64 Not Out!

As we approach the midway point of our Lifelong Learning Network, I can look back with pride at our role in the establishment and continuing development of 64 innovative and flexible awards to date, which include CPD, Foundation degrees and Honours degrees. I can look forward to progressing the many more projects in the pipeline, as well as those projects yet to come as we expand our involvement with the region's FE and HE institutions.

Increasingly we are involved with other government strategies within the West Midlands such as the Local Area Agreements, which have indicators for level four achievement, a University Challenge bid and the HEFCE Economic Initiative Fund. We regard these involvements as very important in maximising the added value of the Lifelong Learning Network.

Within this newsletter we have included summaries of our European project involvement, current curriculum developments and the outcomes of our conference which took place in March. If anyone has any comments about anything within this edition of our newsletter we would be pleased to hear from you.

Jill Ward

Putting you in the picture

At March's conference we launched our new Guide to Higher Education in Staffordshire and Shropshire.

This guide contains information on how flexible the pathways into and through higher education can be, with a route map that helps everyone see where they are now and where they can go next!

ARE YOU PART OF THE EMPLOYER OFFER YET? The first Employer Engagement Forum event

The LLN has teamed up with the Economic Regeneration Team at Telford & Wrekin Council to start a biannual Employer Engagement Forum including Train to Gain, college and business brokers, Education Business Advisers and all other employer engagement teams across the region. The aim is to build a working group that helps create support for policy work and identify and disseminate localised funding and contacts. We don't expect you to share your employer names or relationships, but if you want to know how you can work with other agencies and avoid duplication of effort

in the region through better signposting and partnering, this is the group for you. The first event took place on 3rd June at Priorslee Campus, Telford with presentations from Business Link and the National Apprenticeship Service and much discussion about how to work smarter. The next event will be held in September so get your business cards ready.

If you have not yet received your free copy of the Guide to Higher Education in Staffordshire and Shropshire, or would like to be part of the September Employer Engagement event, please call Clare Keegan on 01785 353732.



www.llnstaffordshireshopshire.org

Conference success



Some 110 delegates attended our mid-term Culture, Change & Collaboration conference on 3rd March 2009.

Conference delegates, including senior managers from major employers, higher education, colleges and work-based learning providers from across the region, were told about the benefits workers could gain from the diverse range of courses offered by the LLN.

The conference featured presentations by Dr John Selby, Director of Education and Participation at HEFCE, Staffordshire University's Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Professor Christine King, as well as entrepreneur and philanthropist Kavita Oberoi, who has appeared in Channel 4's programme The Secret Millionaire.

Case studies of learners were delivered via a Learner Journey film and panel session and all sectors held workshops to bring delegates up to speed with latest developments.

The conference generated a great deal of interest, helped us to reach more people, including employers, who have gained an understanding of how they can work with the Lifelong Learning Network.

The theme of the conference and the message conveyed by its guest speakers underlined the importance of flexibility in education, the benefits of new types of learning and the need to tackle the problem of progression for underrepresented groups, particularly excluded ethnic groups and women.

"I've taken a great deal from the conference both on a personal and professional level. I was particularly struck by Christine King's talk as everything she was saying is what I believe in and am seeking to achieve in my work with FE and HE partners."



"Speakers were very inspirational."

"Focused, thought provoking, excellent session, very good networking."



"A fantastic event - the variety of the topics was inspiring, well done."



Our thanks to Staffordshire University Photography Student Joel Sutton, who took these pictures for us.

LLN facilitates Stoke 6th Former progression opportunities with Staffordshire University

Friday 27th March saw the formal signing of 3 Progression Agreements between the City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College and Staffordshire University that will guarantee current and future qualifying learners a place at Staffordshire University.

The agreements, signed by Sixth Form College Principal Helen Pegg, Staffordshire University's Business School Dean Susan Foreman, Hilary Jones, Dean of the Faculty of Health and Anne Parry, Dean of the Faculty of Art, ensure progression for learners who meet certain key criteria and who are taking the BTEC National Certificate in Sport, in Business or in Art & Design, on to a range of associated degree courses currently offered by the University.

Helen Pegg was joined for the formal signing by Jill Ward, LLN Director and Wendy Munro, the LLN's Progression Co-ordinator. One of the LLN's targets set by HEFCE, is to ensure the development of Progression Agreements with Staffordshire University and all other HEIs in the region.

Stoke Sixth Form College will promote the existence of these new and exciting opportunities at Staffs with all its current and future BTEC National Certificate learners.



Be-TWIN: an ECVET system for initial vocational education and training

“Mobility is essential not only in promoting the economic and social integration of Europe, but also in intensifying European exchanges of experience and bringing forward European citizenship”

Our LLN, representing the region, has been successful in its application to become involved in the European Commission's Leonardo Da Vinci Be-TWIN project to test a joint ECVET/ European Credit and Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS).

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) aims to facilitate:

- The mobility of people undertaking training
- The validation of the outcomes of lifelong learning
- The transparency of qualifications
- Mutual trust and co-operation between vocational training and education providers in Europe.

Since 2006, the EC has financed 33 projects for testing and supporting the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) which have focused on improving the coherence, clarity and certainty of progression opportunities for vocational learners into and through higher education.

The EC is also supporting a number of pilot projects focused on the ECVET which build on themes and issues identified in the EQF projects.

Be-TWIN involves nine work packages and the LLN will be involved in each, contributing more specifically to the following individual areas:

- Methodology
- Project Evaluation and Quality Assurance
- Exploitation of Results
- Dissemination and Communication Strategy.

There are 9 countries involved (UK [LLNs and Stratford College], Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece and Italy), and fifteen partner institutions.

There will be a website to support the project and we shall produce regular updates highlighting our contributions to each work package and the overall progression of the project.

Linking policy to practice, we've recently experienced for ourselves another element of

the Leonardo da Vinci project with the highly successful short term placement of graduate and Parisian Christine Traore. Her time with the LLN team offered Christine the chance to improve her competences, knowledge and skills and we benefited greatly from having her. "The programme is an excellent opportunity to every people (sic) who want to improve for their jobs. This work experience has contributed to improve my English and confidence in my work. It was very enriching because it permitted me to discover another country and culture. An immersion which opens the spirit, forces us to adapt ourselves and to acquire independence."

For further information on our Be-TWIN work, please call Phil Whitehead on 01785 881005. For more about the Leonardo da Vinci project, visit www.leonardo.org.uk or ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/leonardo/Leonardo

Latest News & Events

3 June - Employer Engagement Forum, Priorslee Campus, Telford

5 June - Midlands Research and Data Group meeting, Staffordshire University

30 September - Stakeholder Meeting, Keele University

Sectorfocus

Public Sector & Services

The Public Sector, Public Services Discipline Group is having a busy time of late. The preparation for the validation of the Foundation

Degree in Community Regeneration, (to be delivered conjointly between Telford College of Art & Technology and the University of Wolverhampton), is gathering pace and is set for a September 2009 intake of students. The collaborative venture between RegenWM and Staffordshire University Creative Communities Unit, 'Learning Laboratory', has had its first intake of students and plans are afoot for more exciting developments in this partnership.

There are also developments between partner colleges, for example the new South Staffordshire College is pressing ahead with, and has interim approval for, a Foundation degree in Sustainable Communities, as well as other related Foundation Degrees and it is hoped that a Foundation Degree in Uniformed Public Sector (working title) may be developed by City of Wolverhampton College, in conjunction with the University of Wolverhampton, in which Staffordshire University has also expressed an interest.

The LLN hosted a breakfast meeting recently at Wolverhampton University Science Park. Well attended by employers, the meeting has led to potentially significant developments between the LLN and its partners in the local communities.

The LLN is active in the planned 'Regeneration Hub' at Staffordshire University, and it is hoped that more developments from this exciting initiative will be forthcoming.

In a similar vein initial discussions have taken place regarding the development of bespoke, tailored learning opportunities for both Staffordshire Probation Service and Staffordshire Voluntary Services, both of which promise to be very exciting!

All in all, an interesting and busy time which augurs well for the future.



Creative & Media

"The University of Wolverhampton has begun the development of its Foundation degree in Performance Industries Pathways (PIPS). The new degree will cover five pathways:

Music Performance
Creative Music Production
Dance Performance
Musical Theatre
Technical Theatre

Initial development of the project began in partnership with New College Telford, Wolverhampton College, Burton College and Stoke College and has already increased to include the

Academy of Music and Sound in Birmingham as well as Dudley College. The

hope is to expand the programme to include colleges from across the West Midlands region. For further information, contact Nigel Beer.



Technology

The Technology Discipline group is currently developing two new bids on the subject of Industrial Symbiosis. This is the practice of bringing together companies to operate collaboratively with the aim of making a more efficient use of resources by trading and recycling material, energy and water. This project has a company partner, International Synergies Ltd, working with the academic departments at Staffordshire University and Harper Adams University College. These projects are to fund the development of new undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in the area of Industrial Symbiosis. The project will offer work-based learners the chance to gain a qualification, via flexible delivery methods, which reflects the current government targets in diversion from landfill, corporate social responsibility, sustainability and carbon and climate change metrics. The initial students will be employees of International Synergies and two of their partners.

Please contact Rosie Borup for more information.

Cross Cutting Themes

Sales Promotion

Our recent work in Leadership & Management has led us to consider the current issues of progression into a career in sales and the limited offer of higher level sales qualifications in our region. It also highlighted the impact a continued scarcity of qualified sales professionals in key sectors will have on the region's ability to compete in the global economy. As the Marketing and Sales Standards Setting Body Apprenticeship Framework in Sales & Telesales is currently

under review, we have been taking the opportunity to find out how Higher Education might offer new types of work based education to apprentices or those already undertaking vocational sales qualifications.

Naturally we required the support of the region's employers to find out what the curriculum solution might look like and carried out a survey with over 150 employers to find out which types of sales training take

place, for whom it's provided and at what level. Asked to give up 15 minutes of their time to talk to independent consultancy ICE Business Improvements, we captured a sample view as to the size of the problem and potential solutions. On the 18th May at Staffordshire University's campus in Stoke on Trent, we presented the findings of this survey to employers, providing further information and resources about how Higher Education is changing. If you would like a copy of the survey's findings and recommendations please contact Clare Keegan.

Health & Social Care

A very healthy attendance!

The latest Health and Social Care Employer Forum was held on the 25th March at South Staffordshire College's Rodbaston campus near Penkridge and attracted a delegate attendance of 100%.

The event, funded by the LLN, is held regularly to explore the Health and Social Care curriculum in relation to higher education, to provide an update on current LLN Health and Social Care projects and

contributes significantly to inform and shape future LLN work in the sector.

The latest meeting focused on two key themes of particular interest currently: 'Widening Participation and Emerging Roles within the Health Sector' as well as 'Transforming Social Care'. Presentations were given by Anne O'Leary, from NHS West Midlands and Karen Palmer, from Staffordshire County Council's Health &

Social Care Directorate. Clare Keegan, the LLN's Employer Liaison Officer, also presented on the subject of developing employers' knowledge of Higher Education. Delegate feedback after the event was extremely positive.

The next Employer Forum event is scheduled to take place in the autumn. For information on this, or any Health & Social Care matter, please contact Anne Longbottom.

Research

The LLN's Research Officer, Amelia Rout, is continuing work on several projects including providing evidence-based recommendations around curriculum development, engaging learners and employers and career pathways.

The Shropshire Care Home Project sees us working with a number of partners including Shropshire Partners in Care, Skills for Care, and several councils, universities and colleges across the Network. The project aims to investigate learning and development in the Shropshire care home sector using a variety of methods including a literature

review and interviews/focus groups with care home owners and staff and council staff. The literature review is complete and has a number of findings. For example, there is virtually no discussion of whether or not staff working in the care home sector may benefit from learning and development on study skills. There is very little information about accredited courses; most courses discussed are short, unaccredited courses. Data collection for the next part of the study is underway.

A number of other projects are being developed including a market research study to scope Information, Advice and Guidance

(IAG) regarding funding for HE study for non-traditional learners, in partnership with Keele University. The research will involve investigating the gaps in current IAG regarding HE funding for vocational learners, mature learners and those from families on lower incomes, as they are not in school or college and may therefore have limited access to such information. Financial insecurity is one of the main reasons that learners fail to complete their studies, and these groups have been identified as being particularly at risk. Subject to the outcome, a follow on project is envisaged to provide a regional resource to fill this gap.

IAG for Skills Updating

In partnership with the Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull LLN, we are developing an online one-stop shop for information and advice for vocational learners, employees and the unemployed. This website will provide a rich information resource with details of part time CPD and other flexible

learning opportunities for people in work or the unemployed who want to update their skills at HE level. Linked to the Aimhigher Learning Pathways System (ALPS) and the 14-19 prospectuses in the four local authorities for Staffordshire and Shropshire, the system will also provide an online tool for vocational

learners and 14-19 Diploma students to identify how progression agreements can support their progress into higher education in the region's HEIs. The system will be available in the autumn term 2009 and will provide a focus for part time learner progression and skills updating.

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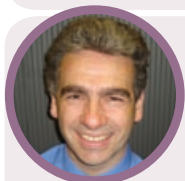
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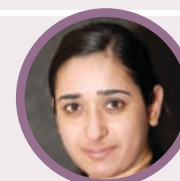
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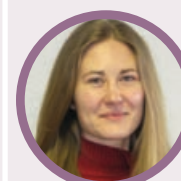
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