



Apprenticeship Progression

The number of learners taking apprenticeships continues to rise, with some seventeen thousand West Midlands learners currently on Advanced Apprenticeships. Their training programmes are set out in advanced apprenticeship frameworks made up of work-based training by employers, a competence-based element such as NVQ3 delivered by colleges or private training providers and functional skills such as Maths and English. Despite the success we have had in securing progression agreements for advanced apprentices, their overall progression rate remains low, as it does nationally, peaking at 6% last year, as compared with over 40% of BTEC National Diploma students. For most apprentices, it seems that their education and training aspirations don't extend beyond Level

3, despite recent projections of increased future demand for higher level skills at Level 4 and beyond.

Higher level

Higher Apprenticeship frameworks have now been introduced incorporating higher level qualifications such as Foundation Degrees, but in practice their availability is limited and they have yet to gain the recognition and currency they need to become a standard final stage of the apprentice journey (there are currently only about a dozen learners on higher apprenticeships in the West Midlands).

In a concerted attempt to address the issue of apprenticeship progression we have formed a collaborative partnership with Birmingham LLN to fund an initiative to improve apprentice progression rates across the region. All four West Midlands LLNs are engaged with the project, which has ESF support and is led by an Apprenticeship Progression Co-ordinator.

We are pleased to welcome Kevin Buckley to the team in this role. Kevin's background is at the FE/HE interface having been the HE Manager at Walsall College for many years and, more recently, the Progression Manager at Coventry and Warwickshire LLN. For further information about apprenticeship progression please contact Kevin at k.buckley@staffs.ac.uk or call 07885 096125.



Adrian Pitt

Adrian Pitt brings his expertise to the LLN
Adrian joins the LLN with 15 years experience of the work-based learning and Information, Advice and Guidance sectors.

Adrian says: "I'm hoping my time spent with various local and national training providers and my roles working with for the Connexions service will help me to hit the ground running. I'm aware there's a huge awareness-raising task to be done with staff and learners around progression routes into Higher Education and I'm really looking forward to getting my teeth into the role."

Support

Adrian is currently on a whistle-stop needs-analysis tour of Staffordshire and Shropshire! He says: "I'm getting to the know the staff at many of the providers, colleges and Higher Education Institutions, picking their brains to find out how I can support them and complement what they're already doing. Everybody has welcomed me with open arms and I know I'm going to enjoy the next six months working for the LLN."

To contact Adrian email adrian@develop-meant.com or call 07854 929 869.

Summer 2010



NetworkNews



Conference 2010

DEVELOPMENTS & EVENTS

Signing up to Progression Agreements

A shared vision with Staffordshire County Council Launch of Staffordshire Manager

Women in Engineering Our latest research findings

A FIRST OF ITS KIND Health & Social Care Funding in the West Midlands

YOU'RE HIGHERED! LLN Showcase at The Real Apprentice

Meet the Team

Jill Ward
Director
T: 01785 353773
M: 07824 461015
E: jill.ward@staffs.ac.uk

Iain Mansell
Director's Administrator
T: 01785 353274
E: iain.mansell@staffs.ac.uk

Wendy Munroe
Progression Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353609
M: 07919 334584
E: w.munro@staffs.ac.uk

Anne Longbottom
Health & Social Care & Cross Cutting Themes Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353484 M: 07901 968745
E: a.h.longbottom@staffs.ac.uk

Nici Westraadt
Health & Social Care Administrator
T: 01785 353589
E: n.a.westraadt@staffs.ac.uk

Tim Crossfield
Public Sector & Services Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353279
E: t.crossfield@staffs.ac.uk

Nigel Beer
Creative & Media Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353279
M: 07891 517296
E: N.Beer@wlv.ac.uk

Jatinder Shaheed
Public Sector/Creative & Media Administrator
T: 01785 353279
E: j.shaheed@staffs.ac.uk

Rosemary Borup
Technology Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353829
M: 07949 992184
E: r.borup@ln.staffs.ac.uk

Dina Varnarva
Technology & Data Administrator
T: 01785 353773
M: 07824 461015
E: D.Varnarva@staffs.ac.uk

Amelia Rout
Research Officer
T: 01785 353817
E: a.c.rout@staffs.ac.uk

David Round - Information, Advice & Guidance Co-ordinator
T: 01782 734482
M: 07702 573905
E: D.T.Round@acad.keele.ac.uk

Hannah Bayley
IAG Administrator
T: 01782 734482
E: h.s.m.bayley@acad.keele.ac.uk

Chris Drummond
Finance Co-ordinator
T: 01785 353692
M: 07779 826274
E: c.drummond@staffs.ac.uk

Lisa Black
Marketing Officer
T: 01785 353811
E: l.black@staffs.ac.uk



Lifelong Learning Network
 66 Staffordshire University Campus C336,
 Beacon Building, Beaconside, Stafford,
 Staffordshire, ST18 3AD.

Director's Foreword

Welcome to the Summer edition of NetworkNews.

I hope that you will enjoy reading about the latest developments in our Network in this all-new edition of NetworkNews. We are currently very busy and can see the considerable difference that the work of our LLN has made, and is making, in developing and enhancing provision with our partners and stakeholders.

My concern with this network, as with the whole LLN movement, is one of ensuring that the work continues following the HEFCE funding period. From the National Directors' Forum we continue to strive towards establishing strategic relationships with other significant groups and organisations.

SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

This is now having significant results, whereby the vision of how the work can be continued is becoming a reality. Amongst other things, lock out for a joint conference between the LLNs, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) that is currently planned for January.

We are also very interested in the current agenda about progression of higher level apprentices and are currently putting together a position paper to emphasise the ideal position LLNs are in to meet this agenda. A few of us met with David Lammy in March. This was a successful meeting and he was very supportive of the work that the LLNs have done and recognised their particular value in terms of enhancing social mobility and their contribution to work-based learning.

CELEBRATE EXPERTISE

Finally, I believe that we should celebrate the immense expertise which exists within our LLNs, and, its uniqueness. Our staff has developed the expertise not only to work between the FE/HE interface but also across HEIs which, before the LLN movement, would not have worked together. It is this knowledge base which could be very influential in taking forward future developments and I sincerely hope that it will be used.

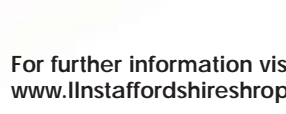
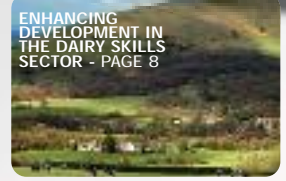
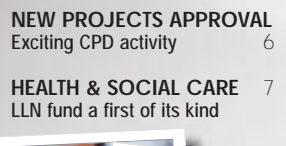
Very best wishes

Jill Ward

Jill Ward
 Director, Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin
 Lifelong Learning Network.
 Chair of LLN Directors' Forum



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For further information visit
www.llnstaffordshireshropshire.org

A Celebration of Our Landmark Achievements

Leading on from the Legacy of the LLN at our annual conference in June.

This issue, we bring you the details of our annual conference to be held on the 17th June at Shropshire's historic Ironbridge Gorge Museum. The chosen theme for this final conference is that of 'Landmark Achievements - Leading on from the Legacy'.

Since the establishment of Lifelong Learning Networks collectively we have achieved over 1,000 Progression Agreements that have resulted in the creation or modification of 250 higher education courses and the allocation of 74,000 additional student placements across the UK. As we enter the final months of our LLN, we will be celebrating our partnership, showcasing our successes, as well as looking ahead and planning how we can help partners to maximize future opportunities and face the challenges ahead.

The event, which is set to take place at the venue's Coalbrookdale site, is set to be an informative and

thought provoking day. Featured keynote speakers are the University of Wolverhampton's Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Sir Geoff Hampton and Regional Director for the National Apprenticeships Service John Chudley. A varied range of workshops will be available to attend on the day. Plus, there will be an LLN-inspired documentary theatre performance by North Staffordshire's own groundbreaking New Vic Borderlines company. For a full programme of events visit www.llnstaffordshireshropshire.org/2010conference. There's still time to book your place. Contact Iain Mansell at iain.mansell@staffs.ac.uk.



Looking Back, Moving Forward

Staffordshire & Shropshire Lifelong Learning Network's recent Stakeholder Event plays out to great success. Attendance was strong at the LLN's recent Stakeholder Event which took place at Keele Hall.

This annual event explored both the Lifelong Learning Network's tremendous

achievements over the year gone by, as well as issues such as sustainability and the

national situation. LLN Director Jill Ward highlighted the moral and economic necessity that the work which the Network has so skilfully steered should be used to support and

inform any future developments.

Speakers

Speakers at the event included Women in Enterprise Project Lead, Sharon George and the University of Wolverhampton's Nidhi Shah, who addressed the audience on embedding Progression Agreements. Workshops were also a

focal aspect of the day which centred on the topics of Progression from Apprenticeships, Collaborative Curriculum Development, Employer Engagement and Working with FE and Work Based Learning Providers. Closing comments to the day's events were provided by Staffordshire University's David Jenkins.



sun HERE COMES THE SUN! If you're a member of Staffordshire University's SUN social networking site why not join our LLN Conference group at <http://learning.staffs.ac.uk/sun/pg/groups/6700/lln-conference-2010/>

StakeholderEvent

Director Jill Ward and some of the Lifelong Learning Network team at the LLN Stakeholder event in March.

YOU'RE HIGHERED!

advice concerning their potential HE options but were hands on with two fantastic resources – the LLN Information Hub and Aimhigher's Alps site. To find out more about these sites visit <http://infohub.llnstaffordshireshopshire.org/and> www.alps-wm.ac.uk/map.aspx.



The LLN team spread the word at The Real Apprentice Showcases. This springtime the LLN had a positive impact by joining forces with Aimhigher in a call to action at The Real Apprentice showcases. These events, which were organised by the National Apprenticeships Service and aimed towards 14-18 year olds, ran throughout March, April and May. Career-minded youngsters visiting our stand not only obtained some expert

Right: Apprenticeship Progression Co-ordinator Kevin Buckley at the LLN/AimHigher stand at The Real Apprentice event, County Showground, Stafford.



HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE AT HAWKSTONE

The LLN Health and Social Care Employer Forum took place on 13th April against the stately backdrop of Hawkstone Park, Weston-under-Redcastle.

PARTNERSHIP
The programme for the day focussed on the ways employers and education providers are working in partnership to support the development of new and existing roles within health and social care and how this has been supported through the LLN. Speakers at the event included Candy Cooley, Head of Hospital and Specialist Education and Training and Sarah Baxter, Assistant Practitioner Workforce Development Project Manager, both from NHS West Midlands.

CHASE BUSINESS NETWORKING LUNCHEON

During April the LLN's Anne Longbottom was guest speaker at the Chase Business Networking Luncheon - an event organised by Karen Morris from South Staffs College for businessmen and women in the Cannock area.

Anne told us: "I was asked to talk about the LLN – who we are and what we do and to share some of the developments that we have been involved in, such as the recent bid to "Build Business Resilience through inspirational leadership" with Finest."

CHANGE THE WORLD
At the event Anne closed with an apt quote from Nelson Mandela saying :-

"Vision without action is merely dreaming, Action without vision is merely passing the time of day but combine vision with action and you can change the world"

She continued: "We haven't quite changed the world yet but the collaborative working across Shropshire and Staffordshire has meant new ideas and ways of working are being developed which are beginning to have an impact on the relationships and opportunities for working together between employers, colleges and universities."



INNOVATE & INSPIRE

LLN's free event "Innovative Models in Work-based Assessment" which recently took place at Wolverhampton Science Park's Technology & Innovation Centre was a great success.

by a series of diverse and novel workshops centred on innovative assessment in practice.
RETAIL TO BOMB DISPOSAL!
LLN's Public Sector & Services Co-ordinator Tim Crossfield commented: "I attended one on the use of 'Second Life', a complex virtual on-line world in assessing a range of skills, from retail to bomb disposal! All-in- all, this well

organised event was, I feel, a real success."
The Second Life workshop was presented by Dr Stuart Slater, Director of the Institute of Gaming and Animation at the University of Wolverhampton, who spoke on using this fascinating virtual world as a beneficial tool in work based learning assessment. He told us: "The event was a great opportunity for myself as an academic and researcher to present with an industrial partner in front of such a receptive audience."

He continued: "The work in Second Life that Daden and the University of Wolverhampton are engaged in could lead to innovations in both course design and business use, and it is thanks to the LLN for funding a course in the area."



Nigel Beer introduces the LLN's Innovative Models in Work-based Assessment event.

BUSINESS NETWORKS

Our Director Jill Ward and Health & Social Care Co-ordinator Anne Longbottom attended Finest's sixth and Future Finest's third annual general meeting at the close of March.

The occasion, which took place at the Moat House in Stoke-on-Trent included guest speaker Pat Jackson, Director of the Regional Skills Partnership, Advantage West Midlands.



STAFFORDSHIRE TRAINING PROVIDERS SIGN UP TO PROGRESSION AGREEMENT WITH STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY

Through the work of the Staffordshire and Shropshire Lifelong Learning Network and the Staffordshire Providers Association ten private training providers have signed a progression agreement that aims to support their level three learners into higher education opportunities offered by Staffordshire University, through its SURF partnership. The agreement focuses on outlining opportunities for

advanced apprentices and level 3 NVQ learners to progress onto higher education awards such as foundation degrees. Jill Ward, Director of the LLN said ' this is a very important and timely piece of work that reflects the focus of national policy regarding progression into higher education for these groups of learners. Now the agreement is signed we look forward to working closely with the



providers to offer information and guidance to both learners and tutors so that progression becomes a reality. For further information

contact Wendy Munro, Progression Co-ordinator for the LLN at w.munro@staffs.ac.uk.

LLN Progression Co-ordinator
Wendy Munro pictured with the agreement at the signing event.

Launch of Staffordshire Manager

A shared vision with Staffordshire County Council comes to fruition.

Our LLN, Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire University have been working together to develop a new and exciting leadership and management development programme that combines the in-house expertise of Staffordshire County Council's management development specialists with the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification from Staffordshire University. The whole approach to these qualifications is one of flexibility and contextualisation which is work-related and will demonstrate real benefits, not only for individuals, but also their work teams and the organisation as a whole.

The launch of University Accreditation for the in-house "The Staffordshire Manager" developmental framework took place on 29th April at County Buildings, Stafford and was attended by the LLN's Anne Longbottom (pictured), Chief Executive Nick Bell, Cabinet Members, members of the Corporate Management Team, Heads of HR, members of the Management Development Team plus OD and learning colleagues across the organisation and other senior managers. Cllr Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Assets, Performance and Organisation said: "There has been a strong desire for leadership and management development within Staffordshire county Council to have status and accreditation at a nationally recognised level and we are delighted that this programme will provide this opportunity." In addition to the formal launch of the programme, information



sessions were held which were attended by over 50 specially invited managers who are currently eligible to and interested in gaining accreditation. The first cohort will start in June 2010.

Employer engagement



The LLN is having a say in an important group which aims to have a positive influence upon the local economy and to give the citizens of Staffordshire greater employment opportunities and enhanced skills.

Tim Crossfield, the Coordinator for the Public Sector/Public Services Discipline Group is the Lifelong Learning Network's representative on the Staffordshire Employment and

Skills Group, led by Barry Wilkes, the Strategic Skills Manager for Staffordshire County Council. The group is made up of key organisations, such as Connexions, Business Link, Advantage West Midlands and Chambers of

Commerce, and its aims are to identify the needs of employers in the county, in the short, medium and long term, and to develop a strategy as to how these needs can be met through the provision of training and development activities throughout the county. The Chair of the group has been appointed by

the Staffordshire Economic Development Partnership and reports the progress made to this body as well as to the Staffordshire Employment and Skills Panel. The Lifelong Learning Network is the lead organisation for influencing the provision of Level 4 education and training in Staffordshire, therefore Tim is pleased to be able to have input into Staffordshire Employment and Skills Group on behalf of the LLN.



During the early months of 2010 the Creative and Media discipline group saw much activity and the approval of several exciting new projects.

CREATIVE MEDIA

CREATIVE MEDIA

Since November the primary emphasis of the group has been the development of Continuing Professional Development curriculum, targeted at learners already in employment or seeking to enhance their employability skills. Four projects of this type were approved, namely:-

CPD Video Journalism

This course features a partnership consisting of University of Wolverhampton, ITV Central and local Further Education partners to aid staff development of employees in the broadcasting industry. The course is aimed at established journalists who need to add video reporting techniques to their skills portfolio in the rapidly changing media workplace.

CPD HDMI Workflow

A tripartite collaboration between Staffordshire University, University of Wolverhampton and The Lighthouse Theatre, aimed at offering CPD in multi-platform HDMI production and workflow techniques for those employed within the Film and TV industries. Students on this course will benefit from interactions with established Film producers.

Post Graduate CPD 3D Stereoscopic Animation

This is a collaborative project between University of

Wolverhampton and Staffordshire University to train practitioners in 3D Stereoscopic production techniques. By working together these institutions are able to offer greater resources and a wider skills base to students.

Post Graduate CPD Art Practitioners

This course at University of Wolverhampton and Staffordshire University is designed to enable former students and those established professionals who have yet to display art works the experience of working alongside successful practitioners in their field with successful exhibitions. Credits from this qualification can be counted towards a Masters Degree.

In addition to the above CPD courses the discipline group approved the development of a completion award **BA(hons) Theatre Entertainment and Professional Practice** at University of Wolverhampton which is designed as a progression route from those studying Foundation Degrees on the Performance Industries Pathways Scheme (PIPS), a collaboration which involves a number of regional FE institutions and commercial partners. It will also provide an important progression route for those from other HND/C qualifications in the Midlands who wish to pursue a career in the theatre industry.

All of these developments are aimed at recruiting students for the beginning of September 2010.

REGENERATING COMMUNITIES

SHAPING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



Community Regeneration Foundation Degree set to launch this September, thanks to the LLN.

Our region's Lifelong Learning Network have provided essential funding for a new Foundation Degree in Community Regeneration, currently being developed on a partnership model involving universities, colleges, the voluntary and community sector and key employers in the region.

DEVELOP & DELIVER

The aim is to develop and deliver a Foundation Degree tailored to meet the needs of employers and students in the region where there are significant (and growing) regeneration schemes. This collaborative project involving Wolverhampton, Keele and Staffordshire Universities will have its first cohort of students starting their studies in September 2010 and will be piloted, in the first instance, at Telford College of Arts and Technology.

SKILLS RECOGNITION

It is intended that this new qualification will give recognition of the skills, knowledge and practice that exists in this diverse sector and will establish clear progression routes into Higher Education for learners in the voluntary and community sector and in private and statutory employment.

If you would like to know more about the Foundation Degree in Community Regeneration contact **Phil Whitehead, Vocational Progression Co-ordinator (SURF Office)** on 01785 3533905 or email him on p.r.whitehead@staffs.ac.uk.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

ACCESS TO MEDICINE & HEALTH PROFESSIONS QUALIFICATION
LLN fund and support a first of its kind for the West Midlands.

This award, which has been funded and supported by our LLN, has been developed in close partnerships by New College Telford, Stafford College, Newcastle College and Keele University. The pioneering course, launching in

September, is designed for adults who aspire to qualify as doctors, or allied professionals, but do not currently hold the requisite qualifications to meet academic admissions criteria for university medical and other associated programmes.

Delegates at our forthcoming LLN Conference in June can find out more about this course in a dedicated workshop on the day. This will be presented by the LLN's Anne Longbottom, alongside Dr Gordon Dent, Director of Admissions,

Keele University School of Medicine and Dr Paula Roberts, Keele University Faculty of Health, Director of Schools and College Liaison Senior Lecturer in Pharmacology at Keele University. To register your attendance and book your place contact **Iain Mansell** at iain.mansell@staffs.ac.uk or call **01785 353274**.



Learning Opportunities in Dementia



Dementia Care Foundation Certificate offers Continuing Professional Development.

The population in the UK is ageing and more people are living to very old age. This brings challenges to both health and social care services. With the rise in older people there will simultaneously be a rise in the number of older adults with health and social care needs. In particular, it is anticipated there will be an increase in the number of people suffering dementia. In order to encourage employers, employees, carers and service users to find out more about dementia and access to higher education, Staffordshire University have developed a series of workshops that can either be standalone or more importantly be studied as part of a University Foundation Certificate. The aim is to encourage and provide real opportunities for people to access higher education, some for the first time.

IMPROVING CARE

For example, South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare Foundation NHS Trust have shown interest in these developments and consider it useful for supporting their non-registered healthcare staff into further training and education and as a way of improving the quality of care delivered. Our LLN has funded a series of 16 standalone 'bite-size' workshops for Staffordshire University's Faculty of Health over modules: Dementia awareness and Dementia interventions, culminating in this award. The workshops,

which are currently underway and running through until July are being held at the Faculty's Stafford site and focus on all aspects of dementia, responding to those affected including service users and carers.

THESE WORKSHOPS

The workshops are open to all and will be useful to anyone working in health and social care settings. Project Lead Sherri Rhodes-Martin told us: "This was the first time we had converted a module to a series of discreet workshops which we could open up to a wider audience. We were a little nervous as to how it would work, in particular the logistics of having a different group each workshop and making sure we didn't make the group doing the whole module more important than those opting into just one or two workshops. But it's all worked well and because it was such a mixed group from the beginning everyone accepted it as the norm. The first module is now finished and the second module within the award started 'election day' which ensured we had a good attendance - 26 people for the first workshop!"

"It was very informative and based between work and personal experiences. There was a good link between theory, its application and practice."

STOKE'S RACHEL WHITEHOUSE, AN ADULT NURSE WHO ATTENDED ONE OF THE WORKSHOPS.



"THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME WE HAD CONVERTED A MODULE TO A SERIES OF DISCREET WORKSHOPS WHICH WE COULD OPEN UP TO A WIDER AUDIENCE."

LEAP Year Zero

LEARNING EDUCATION & PROGRESSION

Flexible learning with LEAP Year Zero at Wolverhampton University.

Leap Year Zero is an LLN funded programme aimed at raising aspirations and encouraging progression for adult learners from a variety of different backgrounds.

Part of Wolverhampton University's FLoW - Flexible Learning at the Wolverhampton University - at a recent LLN Health & Social Care discipline group meeting Module Leader Peter Eggison reported that the course had been a great success so far. Key objectives of this one year course of study are to enable students to gain experience in a variety of study methods prior to committing themselves to registering for a degree course.

FROM FIELD TO FORK...

The LLN has recently approved funding for two courses which will enhance development in the Dairy Skills sector.

The National Skills Academy for Food & Drink Manufacturing has been working on the main skills/development issues facing this sector, including working for two years with a steering group of the UK's largest Dairy employers. During this development a

variety of projects were implemented including Project Eden, a new £7m Dairy facility at Reaseheath College which will act as the National Skills Academy centre for higher level skills development for the UK dairy industry. The work of the steering

group was instrumental in creating new curriculum with the initial development of a new Foundation Degree that has been created by Reaseheath College with support from the industry and validated by Harper Adams University College.

The project was required to offer a series of next steps, a PG Certificate, diploma and an MSc in Dairy Management so that the choice of routes are available for current learners when they complete the FD, or BSc top up.

Project Eden has provided the opportunity to look at what the dairy industry wants and works back to new qualifications at various levels and for a variety of job roles, and so developing a brand new suite of qualifications for the sector.

WOMEN IN ENGINEERING

The LLN ask why there are low numbers of female learners in Engineering on foundation degrees and undergraduate courses.

A recent LLN research project focussed on exploring the reasons for this. Recommendations from this research highlighted the importance of introducing engineering to female learners from a younger age, potentially in secondary school to those girls aged between eleven to fourteen years old. In addition, teachers should be better informed of the higher education courses available as well as learners, parents and the general public being informed on the ranges of engineering careers available.

OPEN DAYS

In addition, it was recommended that secondary school teachers and learners should attend university

engineering open days and that employers should continue to engage with young female learners. At the time of print LLN Research Officer Amelia Rout told us: "We are currently working to take the findings from the project forward. There is a meeting scheduled next week, and it is likely that the LLN will concentrate on women doing apprentices in engineering, because gender difference are particularly marked in this group." She continued: "The team are likely to focus on IAG for teaching staff, gathering together material already available, such as case studies, progression agreements, resources, visits to industry and new types of engineering."

RESEARCH LATEST

Our David Round, Amelia Rout and Chris Brownless investigate the experience of vocational entrants in Higher Education

The prominence of vocational and work-based routes into higher education has been highlighted by the government's *Higher Ambitions* paper. Learners' diverse backgrounds were also recently noted in Peter Mandelson's speech to the CBI, which spoke of those now opting for flexible, part-time study to fit around the workplace. Against this policy background, the Staffordshire, Stoke-on-Trent, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin LLN is undertaking a major research study into the experience of vocational and work-based entrants in higher education today, particularly to explore how vocational and work-based entrants fare in terms of retention and achievement. It also looks at the background and prior educational achievement of vocational and work-based entrants.

The LLN study looks at the HESA statistical student population data sets from 2005/6 to 2007/8 and links these data to the demographic data sets IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation) and to HEFCE Polar 2 (a widening participation data model).

The LLN's statistical analysis of this large student dataset for the Staffordshire and Shropshire region indicates that:

- The headline figures for the withdrawal rates of vocational learners need to be viewed in a wider including programme type, mode of attendance and location of study; and
- Vocational entry routes are important to an effective widening participation strategy; and
- The biggest differences between vocational and traditional entrants are connected not with the choice of entry route but the background of those learners.

Questionnaires, interviews and focus groups took place with a variety of groups to further explore the any differences with vocational entrants and key stakeholders. The qualitative data were explored using thematic analysis resulted in seven main themes:

- Differences and Similarities between Groups
- Motivation to Enrol
- IAG Accessed Before the Course
- IAG Accessed During the Course
- Study Skills
- Withdrawal
- Solutions

RECOMMENDATIONS

The overall recommendations from the research are that the Lifelong Learning Network:

- Raise awareness amongst admissions tutors, admissions teams and admissions policy makers of the successful performance of vocational entrants.
- Links with existing student support networks and offers funding to improve the visibility of sources of information, advice and guidance, so that vocational learners who may need additional support are better able to access this support.
- Invests in staff development to respond to manage learner expectations and the cultural change from FE to HE for example reciprocal placements for teachers in FE and HE to improve the link between the two environments, or joint staff development sessions.

The LLN are currently developing a programme of practical measures that build on the findings of this research. For further information visit www.llnstaffordshireshropshire.org or contact Amelia Rout (a.c.rout@staffs.ac.uk, 01785 353817).



WOMEN IN BUSINESS
A new route to education and enterprise for women in Staffordshire

Needs and barriers faced by women in enterprise and education were studied in a survey commissioned by the Lifelong Learning Network. The main findings challenged some existing models of business support delivery and indicated that many women did want to start a business but faced skills and economic barriers. A pilot networking event took place on 3rd February that explored this further with a group of women in Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent. This event was attended by women from the local area and local business supporters and was a success with all women who attended, saying that

they would come again and would recommend the event to others.

LESSONS LEARNED

There has been significant interest in running more similar events from local women and Children's Centres. The Lifelong Learning Network activity has attracted a lot of attention from the local business support organisations and from BBC Radio Stoke, who have followed the progress of the activity from the first survey disseminating the activity, to the Staffordshire region on the Stuart George Show. Using the findings and lessons learned a new training course is being developed by Dr. Sharon

George of NovaSci Ltd that will address the training needs of women who are looking to further their aspirations and explore their business ideas. The 150 hour course "Introduction to Starting a Business" will be run out of Staffordshire University and will not only equip women with skills in entrepreneurship but also vital skills necessary in

business and education: presenting, networking, studying and researching. The course will be piloted at Staffordshire University in July.

RESEARCH

Dr. Sharon George told us: "Our research has indicated that women in this area are very risk averse, partly based on negative past experience of business failure in the area and that women thinking of any significant life change need more than confidence."

SUPPORT

Dr George continued: "They need evidence that their idea will work and they can afford to make the change in terms of commitment and financially. This course

HEALTH CARE ASSISTANT FORUM

The Stoke-on-Trent PCT Health Care Assistant (HCA) Forum took place at Haymarket Health Centre, Tunstall on 10th May.

The theme of the meeting was "Personal and Professional Development" and looked at the opportunities within practice for the HCAs to develop their knowledge and skills through higher education. Anne Longbottom, Health and Social Care Co-ordinator for the LLN led the session using the NHS Career Framework to prompt discussion about access to higher education.

DELIVERING CARE IN THE COMMUNITY

Dawn Suffolk, Senior Lecturer from Staffordshire University spoke about the CPD Award for Health Care Assistants - Delivering Care in the Community and the foundation degrees that the university is developing to support non-registered staff in health and social care. The afternoon was a great success and the HCAs who attended said they now felt more confident to contact a university to ask about courses that might support their personal and professional development.



The HCA Forum in action

will help women to get this by research and understand their risk to do this by giving women space, information, skills and morale support."

LLN CONTINUES TO CONTRIBUTE

Update on Be-TWIN Leonardo Project

This three-year project is focussed on defining the connection between the ECTS and ECVET systems in order to facilitate greater mobility for learners wishing to move between vocational and academic education and training systems. Essentially, Be-TWIN's aim is to:

- Improve learners' and workers' horizontal and vertical mobility.
- Foster a common approach to education and training in Europe, thus linking the benefits of both systems and fostering mutual understanding.
- Develop transferability, integration and recognition of qualifications in Europe.

The LLN continues to contribute to key 'work packages' within the project and most recently has helped to write the draft methodological guide which has been developed to support the process of testing taking place in three case studies in the plastics industry, hospitality management and training of trainers. The LLN also produced a glossary of key terms and concepts to be used to guide the application of the methodology.

TESTING THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology and glossary will be published in late June and we are currently waiting for the outcomes of the latest workshop for organisations involved in testing the methodology.

JUNE 24&25

BULGARIA CONFERENCE

DIARY DATE

ON JUNE 24TH AND JUNE 25TH THERE WILL BE A CONFERENCE IN BULGARIA TO DISSEMINATE THE LATEST FINDINGS AND THESE WILL BE POSTED ON THE PROJECT WEBSITE AT: www.betwin.eu.com

"The team are likely to focus on IAG for teaching staff, gathering together material already available and new types of engineering."

LLN APEL PROJECT

The operation of APL and APEL policies in the institutions of the LLN has been an important area of interest for the Network.

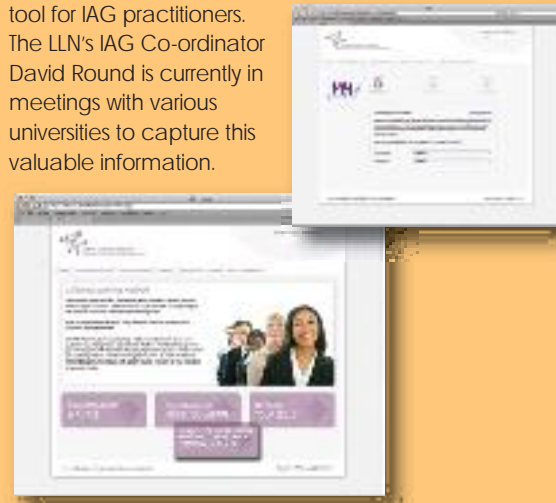
The IAG and Student Support Group and the LLN Steering Group have been discussing the opportunities to develop an IAG resource and staff development package in order to improve access to and IAG about the opportunities for learners to progress via AP(E)L onto HE programmes. The rationale for this

project stems from a concern that many learners – particularly mature learners with significant amounts of work experience and employer-based/professional work-based qualifications – are not aware of and find it difficult to access routes to recognise their prior experience or qualifications.

SIMPLE POLICY GUIDE

Currently, with our partners' support, the LLN aim to develop a simple guide to AP(E)L policies and procedures across the LLN partners, providing clear signposting to a visible and accessible entry point within institutions so that potential learners can discuss their opportunities for recognition of their prior learning and experience

and a staff development tool for IAG practitioners. The LLN's IAG Co-ordinator David Round is currently in meetings with various universities to capture this valuable information.



West Midlands SHA Framework for Foundation Degrees in Health

LLN published in Foundation Degree Forward

The LLN's Anne Longbottom made a significant contribution to a recent feature entitled "The journey: developing a West Midlands Foundation degree 'Scheme' for Health and Social Care" published in the March issue of FdF magazine. This feature was written in conjunction with FdF's Sue Tatum, Director of Employer Partnerships (Public Sector), Conrad

Newbold, Widening Participation Manager, NHS

West Midlands and Sarah Baxter, Assistant Practitioner Workforce Development Project Manager, NHS West Midlands. This work is ongoing and is being used to develop other FDs across the country through FdF. To read the article click on

<http://www.fdf.ac.uk/page.aspx?id=27>, where back issues of Forward can be downloaded from its 'publications library.'



ONGOING WORK

'HIGHER AMBITIONS' THE 14-19 AGENDA



TRAINING AWARENESS

LLN staff have also been involved in raising awareness of diploma progression agreements with IAG staff across the sub-region through staff development activity. The Network has also developed two large progression agreements for learners taking NVQ level 3 and Advanced Apprenticeship qualifications. These agreements have been developed in partnership with the two provider associations that represent Staffordshire and Shropshire. The LLN is also supporting two IAG specialists to act as a resource to work with private training providers to raise awareness of progression for this group of vocational learners.

We have now developed progression agreements for all of the first 14 diploma lines with three of our HEI partners in the Network.

This has been done by working with the four local authorities in the Network and producing simple IAG information in consultation with IAG colleagues across the authorities.

Times Higher Education Awards 2010

Now in its sixth year, the Times Higher Education Awards are a highlight of the academic calendar and a glittering celebration of the best of the sector.

These awards represent a unique and high-profile opportunity to celebrate the excellence and amazing achievements of UK higher education institutions, and reaffirm a commitment to the two core pursuits of higher education: teaching and research. There are 18 categories for 2010 and this year our very own LLN will potentially be in the running to receive an accolade in the Outstanding Support for Students category in association with one of its key partners Staffordshire University. This award, sponsored by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, will be given to the UK institution that has helped students gain

the maximum benefit from their study. Working with Staffordshire University our Network developed Skills for HE, a short accredited course that shines a light on what higher education is about; helps to develop learners' skills in preparation for progression; and most importantly raises learners' aspirations and confidence about progression. The short course has been highly effective for a number of reasons; learners can relate to the module because of the nature of assessment which gradually develops skills and confidence; it introduces them to the language and culture of higher education; and it is delivered with

an expectation that learners can and will progress. In order to measure the success of the initiative a research project was carried out. The study had a number of stages including a questionnaire study which was carried out using two questionnaires given to learners: one at the start of the course and one at the end. All the learners not already in Higher Education had considered progression into higher education with a range of courses mentioned including the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector and nursing courses. Learners were drawn to the course for a variety of reasons including academic, personal and professional development.

EASY & USEFUL

The post course evaluation showed that most learners found the CDRom, which included all the course materials, easy to use and useful. Examples of the best aspects of the CDRom included allowing learners to revisit topics at their own pace and encouraging self-evaluation and reflective thinking. Most of the learners found the course useful and the tutors approachable. Examples of the best aspects of the course included the academic content and the tutors. Most learners found the course assessment appropriate and reported the

feedback from the assessment was useful. Overall the course was evaluated very positively, suggestions for change were very infrequent and all the learners would recommend the course. For the academic year 2009/2010 forty-nine learners were tracked beyond the course and of these fifty-five percent progressed.

This is arguably the most pertinent result as national figures illustrate that progression figures for NVQ level three learners and advanced apprenticeships are three percent onto non work-based HE and five percent onto work-based HE (Gittoes, 2009)². Progression figures into HE for BTEC learners are forty-one percent (Gittoes, 2007)¹. The shortlist will be announced in Times Higher Education in September, and the winners will be revealed at the gala awards dinner and ceremony on 25 November 2010, at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London.



At the time of print our application had been sent...so watch this space for an update next issue!

¹ Gittoes, M. 2007 Pathways to Higher Education: BTEC courses. Issues Paper 2007/35. Bristol: HEFCE.

² Gittoes, M. 2009 Pathways to Higher Education: Apprenticeship. Issues Paper 2009/17. Bristol: HEFCE.