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**For immediate release**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**£2 million project to support 1000 recession hit individuals**

The West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, a project based at the University of Huddersfield has recently secured government funding of £1 million to assist individuals suffering from or at risk of suffering from the economic downturn in West Yorkshire.

The Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) was launched by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in January this year to respond rapidly to the needs of employers and individuals during the economic downturn. In total the fund has provided £25 million to universities and colleges across England. WYLLN and the University of Huddersfield were successful in their bid for £1 million, the maximum amount available for a single project. A further £1 million will be provided by Yorkshire Forward.

The project proposed by the WYLLN will help individuals by providing additional support to that offered by Job Centre Plus and Nextstep. This will include career management packages and learning and training opportunities. The WYLLN project will also be closely aligned with the West Yorkshire Local Authorities' approaches to the recession.

The project will run from April 2009 to September 2010 and aims to benefit 1000 individuals including Senior Managers, Middle Managers, experienced employees, unemployed recent graduates and sole traders or self-employed across West Yorkshire.

Stephen Challenger, Executive Director of the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network (WYLLN) said, "We are delighted to be successful in our bid for funding. As an existing partnership of universities and further education colleges across West Yorkshire, the WYLLN is in an ideal position to carry out this project. This funding provides a unique opportunity for HE providers to work more closely with other agencies to offer real help to people during and after these unprecedented economic circumstances."

**CONTINUES**

The individuals mentioned will benefit by having new opportunities to develop further higher level skills or to find new ways of using existing skills more effectively. This will help them to become more employable during the downturn and into recovery.

The WYLLN partners involved in this 17 month project are: University of Huddersfield, University of Leeds, University of Bradford, Leeds Metropolitan University, Leeds Trinity & All Saints, Leeds City College, Leeds College of Building, Joseph Priestley College, Bradford College, Calderdale College and Wakefield College.

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**Notes to editors:**

1. The West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network is a partnership of all further and higher education institutions throughout West Yorkshire. The project is funded £5.9 million by the Higher Education Funding Council for England from March 2007 – July 2010. The aim of the project is to strengthen the performance of West Yorkshire businesses and the wider regional economy through improved vocational and work-based progression of young people and adults into and through higher education. Objectives of the project can be found at [http://www.wylln.ac.uk/about\\_us](http://www.wylln.ac.uk/about_us)
2. The Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) was launched in January by HEFCE, the higher education funding council for England. More information is contained in the [Economic Challenge Investment Fund - invitation to apply for funding](#)', HEFCE Circular letter 03/2009 to heads of higher education institutions and HEFCE-funded further education colleges.
3. Yorkshire Forward is the regional development agency for the Yorkshire & Humber region. There are 9 such agencies in England, and each is tasked with improving the economy in its own particular region. Yorkshire Forward is funded by central government and also receives funding from the EU. Further information can be found at [www.yorkshire-forward.com](http://www.yorkshire-forward.com)
4. Jobcentre Plus is a government agency supporting people of working age from welfare into work, and helping employers to fill their vacancies. It is part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and plays a major role in supporting the Department's aim to 'promote opportunity and independence for all through modern, customer-focused services'. Further information can be found at [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)
5. **nextstep** is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the organisation that exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. **nextstep** provides information and advice about learning and work to adults aged 20+. The **nextstep** West Yorkshire Partnership (formerly known as the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Partnership) is made up of organisations that support or provide IAG in the West Yorkshire area. The Partnership promotes IAG around the sub-region, has a strategic role in the planning of IAG provision and provides a forum for those who offer IAG. Through its **nextstep** contract with the West Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) it funds delivery to clients through a range of 23 delivery sub-contractors. Further information can be found at [www.nextstepwestyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.nextstepwestyorkshire.org.uk)