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For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

West Yorkshire Celebrates the Achievements of its Lifelong Learners

In recognition of the achievements of local work-based learners, the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, a partnership of further and higher education institutions, has introduced the first annual West Yorkshire Adult Work-Based Learner Awards. In particular, the awards reward individuals who have gained new higher level skills which will improve their career prospects and the performance of the company they work for.

Stephen Challenger, Executive Director of the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network believes there are many benefits of investing in higher levels skills, "learning in the workplace not only helps employees achieve their own career potential, it makes their companies more profitable. Having a highly skilled workforce is essential if the country is to meet the challenges of a globalised economy.

From the nominations received, 7 winners were selected from different industry sectors along with several 'highly commended' nominees in some sectors.

Winners were selected on the commitment they have shown to learning and whose stories are inspirational to any employee wishing to continue in or return to education to gain a higher level qualification.

All winners and highly commended nominees will be presented with their awards at the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network Celebration Event on 12th June at Leeds Civic Hall. The awards are sponsored by the Regional Skills Partnership.

Aspiring midwife Karen McGuinness from Wakefield is the winner of the Health, Social Care and Early Years sector. After becoming a teenage mother, Karen left school at 15 with no GCSEs. Karen has always dreamt of becoming a midwife and now at 29 she looks set to achieve her goal. Having successfully completed the Preparation for Higher Education Certificate at the University of Leeds, while working as an Administration Assistant at Romec

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Ltd and volunteering at the 'Baby Café' in Chapeltown, Karen has gained a place to study midwifery at Sheffield Hallam University in September 2009.

Another winner from the University of Leeds and also studying at the University of Bradford is Philip Kirby, in the Management, Leadership, Innovation and Enterprise sector. Following 3 years out of work due to ill health, Phil joined the University of Leeds Amaze Yourself enterprise training course last year and has set up his own consultancy 'negotiation for nice guys'. Philip is keen to help other individuals and has also set up Amaze Networks, a peer-mentoring website which supports others with ill health to find self-employment, employment or study. To achieve his goal of becoming a trained professional, Phil is currently undertaking a postgraduate course in Regeneration Project Management at the University of Bradford.

Ex-dinner lady and single mother to two young children, Sharon Wood has overcome many personal challenges and has impressed her tutor and employer alike. This week Sharon has completed her Foundation Degree in E-Technology at Park Lane College Leeds which will result in an honours degree after she completes her top up year at Leeds Metropolitan University. Winner of the Culture, Media, Sports and the Arts; Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism sector, Sharon has been an inspiration to work colleagues at Reachfurther.com and to her fellow students by showing commitment to her studies and completing a work placement in Estonia last year. Tutor Julie Best describes Sharon as, "a shining example of what can be achieved if you are willing to make the most of every opportunity which comes your way and to seek a pathway that makes the most of what is before you".

Ann Wood, winner of the Business Services sector works for Kirklees Primary Care Trust who offer the opportunity to gain nationally recognised vocational qualifications in the workplace. Ann successfully completed an NVQ in Business and Administration Level 3 provided by Dewsbury College which has helped her exceed all expectations within her role. Her employer Liz Butterfield is delighted with Ann's achievements, "she has embraced the opportunity to undertake training, coped admirably under pressure and having enjoyed the learning experience has embarked on further study. The benefits to Ann and her employer are clearly visible to all."

Winner of the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing sector, Bradford based Ifzal Parveen has recently gained a First Class B.Eng Honours Degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Bradford following an Advanced Apprentice scheme and Foundation Degree. Eric Morgan, her Foundation Degree Manager praises Ifzal saying, "her achievements are a testament to her positive attitude and are truly inspirational to any female starting out in an Engineering career".

Leeds College of Technology were successful in having winning students in two sectors, Paul

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McFarlane in the Construction and the Built Environment Sector and Robert Kelly in the Digital Industries Sector. Paul has studied various courses at Leeds College of Technology for nine years, most recently the BTEC-HNC in Building Services. A work-based project Paul completed as part of his course was implemented by the company he works for, Airedale Mechanical & Electrical Ltd and has been successfully integrated into their procedures and operations. Robert, an Apprentice Computer Technician at Complete Computer Systems in Morley has shown great self-motivation and since 2004 has successfully completed a Level 2 Apprenticeship, a Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship and is currently working towards a Higher Apprenticeship. In June 2007, Robert was also rewarded with a UKSkills Gold Award and has entered another UKSkills Challenge for 2008.

Highly commended nominees were awarded in 4 of the industry sectors. These nominees include Rachel Wareham, University of Huddersfield, Glynn Richardson, Bradford College, Nicola Wormald, Leeds Metropolitan University in the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Sector; Daniel Vaughan, Jill Wilson and Richard Lumb from Leeds College of Building in the Construction and the Built Environment Sector, Herdip Earnshaw from Wakefield College and Paul Sperrin from Burnley College in the Management, Leadership, Innovation and Enterprise sector and Martha Wande from Leeds College of Technology in the Health, Social Care and Early Years Sector.

The West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network is pleased with the positive feedback about these awards and is confident that next year there will be even more nominations and new categories introduced to also recognise employers' and tutors' support of work-based learners.

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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
2. The WYLLN is focusing its activities around 7 sectors which reflect the sub-regional higher level skill priorities identified by Yorkshire Forward and those of the Learning and Skills Council for West Yorkshire. The Sectors are listed at http://www.wylln.ac.uk/about_us/Sectors
3. There may be limited press places at the Celebration Event. For enquiries regarding press attendance or interviewing the winners please contact Rachael Brough as above.