

# West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network

February 2008 : issue 3

newsletter

*Further and Higher Education Working in Partnership* : *Shaping the Offer for Employers* : *Developing Pathways for Career Progression*

## Welcome from the Director

I would like to welcome you to the third newsletter of the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network (WYLLN). As you can see, this is somewhat more sophisticated than the previous ones and with the forthcoming website launch and the fortnightly news digest I hope you agree our communication with partners is beginning to improve.

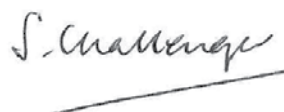
We are now reaching a very interesting and exciting phase in the development of the Network: the work plans from the sector groups are complete, partnership agreements are in, we have commissioned two pieces of IAG activity and we have students funded by WYLLN's additional student numbers on courses in our partner institutions. All this means that significant activity is finally underway! Looking at the predicted outcomes, we should be well on course to exceed the targets agreed with HEFCE, but is this enough?

From the very beginning of the project, I have made my views known that meeting the targets should not be seen as the only measure of success. For me, the true measure of success will be to effect a lasting improvement in the higher skills levels of the people in or about to enter employment in West Yorkshire. This will benefit their employers and the economy in general. To achieve this will mean more than just meeting our targets; it will require a more systematic change to what we do. The challenge is great. Leitch has set out targets for people achieving level 4+, which are demanding to say the least. If we are to achieve these targets, it will require a major change in the way higher education (HE) approaches its work with employers.

The WYLLN as a partnership of all HE providers and with our focus on learners in work or preparing for work, is in an ideal position to act as a catalyst in this change process.

I believe the challenge is for the higher education sector as a whole, not just as individual institutions. The 'Leitch gap' is so great that if the sector fails to close it, then I am sure the government will look at alternative solutions. Already, for example, we are seeing employers being able to offer their own qualifications. To this end, WYLLN with the other lifelong learning networks are in dialogue with Yorkshire Forward, the Learning and Skills Council and the Regional Skills Partnership, together with other HE partnership organisations, to explore how through our joint activities we might better engage with employers as a sector.

For now though, if we are to make this difference, we need to demonstrate that we can deliver, and delivering on our current activities is the way we can demonstrate that. On behalf of my team, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the partners for the commitment you have shown to the project so far. I have been so very pleased and impressed with the amount of time invested and the energy and enthusiasm shown.



**Stephen Challenger**  
*Executive Director*  
*West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network*

## Network Communications

Since November the central team have been working on the Communications Plan for the West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network. WYLLN communications will support the overall business plan in offering added value to the three main target markets of partners and course providers, employers through employer intermediaries and learners through partners and IAG Officers.

Development of the WYLLN website is currently underway, the holding page can be viewed at [www.wylln.ac.uk](http://www.wylln.ac.uk). Please keep visiting the site to view further developments. This website will be the central information source for all target markets and amongst other features, will provide frequent updates on forthcoming events and ongoing developments within the WYLLN, increase awareness of the network's activities, raise awareness of the benefits of higher education and provide signposts to HE provision and resources.



WYLLN holding page

Blacksmith, a Huddersfield based full service design agency have been selected to develop the WYLLN website and are also designing a portfolio of printed marketing materials and branded stationery. Blacksmith have a strong track record in the education and training sectors and were awarded the project after demonstrating their empathy with our objectives and key target audiences. The first priority was to establish a cohesive brand identity for WYLLN before progressing to the rollout of key printed and on-line communications. Commenting on the appointment, Managing Director Neil Smith said,

*"This is the kind of work that we specialise in and as we prepare to launch the website I feel that it has been a great collaborative effort. We are delighted to be working so closely with the team at WYLLN."*

Partners and other stakeholders will be kept updated on network activities not only through the website, but also through the quarterly newsletter, fortnightly news digest, regular conferences and staff development opportunities.

**The WYLLN are currently developing a Social Networking site which will allow partners to share ideas and network with WYLLN colleagues from their own computer, reducing the amount of time spent out of the office attending meetings.**

The site has been developed with the help of Neil Currant at the University of Bradford who believes social networking is a useful tool for the education sector as a whole, "Ning is an online tool that allows users to create and build social networks around their own interests or activities. It is a simple but powerful tool where you can create either public or private networks. The Universities of Bradford, Leeds and Leeds Met, as part of the JISC-ELP2 project, have been researching the use of such social networks in building communities for sharing and learning. One promising area has been the use of social networks in professional qualifications. Distance learning students have been able to use these social tools to interact with their peers on the course in a richer, more productive way to assist their learning."

Look out for an email shortly inviting you to become a member of the site. We are positive this will be a useful forum for sharing best practice ideas and suggestions and will improve communications across the wider partnership.

For further information on marketing and communications please contact **Rachael Brough** at [r.j.brough@hud.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.brough@hud.ac.uk)

## The Future from our Aimhigher Colleagues 2008-2011

As announced at the end of 2007, Aimhigher has secured funding for an additional three years until July 2011. The guidance for Aimhigher Partnerships has just been published and it sets out the objectives, scope and structure of the programme.

The key target groups are:

- people from lower socio-economic groups
- people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation in HE is low
- 'looked after' children in the care system
- people with a disability or a specific learning difficulty

By 2011 Aimhigher partnerships will:

- be able to show how they have contributed to narrowing the social class gap in learner attainment and participation in higher education
- have encouraged more positive learner identities through targeted outreach work
- have embedded Aimhigher activity in the work of all partners by developing links between higher education institutions (HEIs), schools, colleges and work-based learning providers

- have made a recognised contribution to target school and college improvement plans in respect of aspirations, attainment and progression

Please visit Aimhigher West Yorkshire's brand new website to download the complete guidance.

The website is aimed at practitioners and contains news, events, case studies, resources and lots more. Please visit [www.aimhigher.ac.uk/westyorkshire](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk/westyorkshire) to browse. Use the feedback page to let them have your comments, or email **Claire Soppelsa** at [c.soppelsa@hud.ac.uk](mailto:c.soppelsa@hud.ac.uk) if you have any content you would like added.



*The Aimhigher Team: from left to right – Maura Wilson, Helen Child, Denis Barry and Claire Soppelsa.*

## Leeds employers bridge gap between business and education

Leeds employers have taken a leading role in the preparation of the delivery of the first two 14-19 Diploma pilots in Construction and the Built Environment and Creative and Media due to pilot in Leeds from September 2008.

Led by employer representatives from the private and public sector, the Leeds Skills Board was established by Leeds Chamber of Commerce and its partners to tackle the skills issues facing the city's current and future workforce.

Two subgroups of the Leeds Skills Board have been actively involved in the development of the new qualification to ensure that Diplomas equip young people with skills recognised by employers and crucial to local business. Led by Nick Doherty, former Managing Director at Carillion PLC and Malcolm Cowing, Managing Partner at Brahm Ltd, the subgroups have organised a series of events for employers, teachers and young people and their parents to help bring industry into the classroom.

A Construction and the Built Environment event hosted by Carillion was held at Wetherby Racecourse in November, where employers shared their expertise to develop ideas for high quality work experience placements, school industry visits and training for teachers in Leeds. A similar event hosted by Brahm Ltd was also held at Weetwood Hall earlier this week for the Creative and Media Diploma.

The new qualification has been endorsed by the city's Universities with the Construction and the Built Environment Diploma parents evening planned for the 3rd of April 2008 hosted by Michael Arthur Vice Chancellor of the University of Leeds.

Commenting on employers' enthusiastic engagement Gary Williamson acting Chief Executive at Leeds Chamber of Commerce and member of the Leeds Skills Board said: *"The response from our business partners willing to give up their time to help shape the curriculum and play an active role in the development of the Diplomas has been fantastic. It goes to show that business really does have something practical and positive to offer education and young people having to make a choice on their career."*

## Attendees from across the Network attend the Inaugural Progression Conference

The West Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network staff development activities commenced with the inaugural conference on **Seamless Progression: Building Effective Progression Agreements held on the 17th January 2008 at Leeds Trinity & All Saints College.**

The conference was well attended by around 60 delegates which included representation from most of our key partners. Four guest speakers presented during the morning session; Kevin Whitston, Head of Widening Participation of HEFCE commenced with Progression and Progression Agreements: A HEFCE Perspective followed by Justin Edwards, Director of Information Services of the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) who presented on Retention and Achievement. Delegates then heard real-life case studies on approaches to Progression Agreements from two other Lifelong

Networks, Mick Betts from MOVE (The Lifelong Learning Network for the East of England) and Rick Crowshaw from the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance.

During the afternoon, delegates had the opportunity to explore current and potential practice models within two workshops.

Feedback from the delegates stated that the event was very well received, providing access to current government policy, best practice, and insights into how progression may support recruitment, retention and achievement. The event presented an opportunity to capture views of delegates on key features to be incorporated within the WYLLN Progression model and these have been fed into the discussions of the Credit and Progression Task Group.

A second Progression Conference will be held in late June 2008.

## Invitation to join the new WYLLN Staff Development Task Group

As part of the Staff Development Strategy for the WYLLN, we are establishing a Staff Development Task Group. The aim is for the Task Group's membership to be representative of WYLLN's partners and so include colleagues from validating and non-validating higher education institutions, further education colleges, West Yorkshire Learning Providers, IAG partner organisations, and WYLLN's central team.

We would like to invite nominations for membership of the Staff Development Task Group. Initially, the membership commitment will be for a year through to March 2009. It is envisaged that the group will meet on a quarterly basis with the first meeting being held on Monday 14th April 2-4pm.

Please send nominee name and contact details (e-mail/telephone number) through to **Donna Samuels** at [d.m.samuels@hud.ac.uk](mailto:d.m.samuels@hud.ac.uk) by the 14th March.

## Credit and Progression Task Group

The Credit and Progression Task Group held its inaugural meeting on the 29th January 2008. The membership is drawn from validating and non-validating HEIs, FECs, seven sector groups, 14-19 Diploma advisors, West Yorkshire Learning Providers (WYLP), and the WYLLN central team.

The Task Group's remit includes developing a common approach and framework to using credit with vocational and work-based learners, establishing a policy agreement on progression arrangements across partner institutions on vocational learners, how credit arrangements operate

across the sub-region, and developing a Progression Agreement framework and model.

Two activities to be undertaken during February/March to support this remit are, 1) Circulation of a Credit Audit Questionnaire to all HEIs and FECs and, 2) Progression Agreement Working Group to develop a draft model and documentation for presentation at the next Task Group meeting on the 8th April.

The Task Group welcome your support in developing the WYLLN Progression Model. Please contact **Joanne Beaumont** by emailing [j.e.beaumont@hud.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.beaumont@hud.ac.uk) or call **01484 471 106**.

## Successful Partners Awarded Funding for IAG Activity

In January, the WYLLN Commissioning Review Group met to discuss the project proposals received during the first round of IAG commissioning, which closed on 21st December 2007. 11 proposals were received during the first round and the Review Group evaluated each project to establish to what extent the work would support and enhance the key objectives of the WYLLN Strategic Plan.

Total funding of over £60,000 has been allocated to The University of Leeds and Leeds College of Technology who each submitted successful proposals. This funding will be topped up by match funding.

The University of Leeds will be running a 12 month project commencing in March 2008. This project aims to engage with employers to identify employees in public and private sector organisations who are skilled, but not necessarily qualified to level 3. Building on the existing practice and networks of Communities and Partnerships (C&P), the University of Leeds will deliver both individual and group sessions to employees or other flexible forms of IAG delivery to support specific target groups, including under represented Black and Minority Ethnic groups, lone parents, older workers and employees in skill areas which are being professionalised or upgraded. The project aims to 'signpost' 150 adults to appropriate courses, 50% of whom will progress into higher education.

Leeds College of Technology aims to offer 600 'Information for HE' sessions, specifically targeting the following groups:

- Advanced Apprentices coming to the end of their programme
- employers with a particular emphasis on Higher Apprenticeships within specified industries of Electronics, Building Services, Care and IT

- level 3 qualified or skilled individuals who are not currently in higher education. Potential applicants may be referred to detailed IAG sessions within the College's Matrix accredited Student Services.

Nav Chohan, Director of Further and Higher Education at Leeds College of Technology says, "The WYLLN IAG project offers us a great opportunity to encourage more people into higher education. With training from Aimhigher and work on our internal procedures, we will provide IAG to a number of different groups, from employers to those on apprenticeships with private training providers.

Along with many other further education (FE) institutions, Leeds College of Technology is keen to expand our HE provision. We cannot rely on HE learners choosing us simply on the basis of a prospectus or online presence. The WYLLN project will allow us to improve our information and advice for potential HE students while also providing an obvious way of publicising our own offer. We are hoping that the project will be so successful that it will become a normal part of our activity in years to come."

The deadline for the next round of IAG Commissioning is 28th April 2008, please contact **Joanne Lambert** by e-mailing [j.lambert@hud.ac.uk](mailto:j.lambert@hud.ac.uk) or call **01484 471 107** for further information.

## Tracking the West Yorkshire Learner Journey

WYLLN have recently commissioned Axia Interactive Media, a Batley based company to develop our Learner Tracking System.

Axia are specialists in web-based solutions to support learners across all stages of the professional or vocational learning cycle.

The WYLLN Learner Tracking System will be a secure web based system that supports the learner journey from initial IAG intervention, into and through HE in addition to providing valuable Management Information to evidence the successes of the project.

Initial versions of the IAG Management Tool, IAGNow.net, will be piloted with our partner institutions in early March.

For further information on this development please contact **Joanne Lambert** at [j.lambert@hud.ac.uk](mailto:j.lambert@hud.ac.uk) or call **01484 471 107**.

# Sector Focus

Since the last newsletter, all 7 of the sector groups have been holding regular meetings to identify areas of curriculum development, employer engagement and marketing, and staff training and development needs. Most of the groups have now held 3 meetings and will have finalised their 2008 workplans by the end of March. These workplans and minutes from the sector group meetings will be available on the WYLLN website.

Curriculum development plans are in the process of being finalised and it has been agreed that focus is now needed on funding allocations and who will have involvement in the curriculum development activities etc.

Examples of planned curriculum development so far include:

- a generic model for employer facing Foundation Degrees in the Business Sector
- bitesize learning focusing on the sustainability agenda for the Construction Sector
- applied learning in workplace assessment strategies, online teaching and learning methods

- APEL opportunities for professional qualifications.

Each sector group has been working on employer engagement and marketing plans. Proposed activities so far include a Foundation Degree campaign for the Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing sector, a "Creative Network" spanning the work of both the Digital Industries and the Culture, Media, Sport and the Arts; Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism sectors and a Higher Level Apprentices programme.

Bids for additional student numbers have been received by the WYLLN to support new courses developed by the Business Services sector group and the Leadership, Management, Innovation and Enterprise sector group.

The following is a list of the forthcoming Sector Group meetings. If you wish to be involved in any of the groups please contact the relevant Sector Officer.

## **Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, including Food Manufacturing and Related Industrial Chemistry**

2pm, 29th February 2008

contact **Paul Denton** at  
p.d.denton@hud.ac.uk

## **Business Services, including the Finance Sector, Logistics and Retail**

2pm, 17th April 2008

contact **Ann Binns** at  
a.binns@parklanecoll.ac.uk

## **Construction and the Built Environment**

2pm, 28th April 2008

contact **Brian Duffy** at  
bduffy@lcb.ac.uk

## **Culture, Media, Sports and the Arts; Leisure, Hospitality and Tourism**

10am, 3rd March 2008

contact **Chris Bailey** at  
c.bailey@leedsmet.ac.uk

## **Digital Industries including Creative Digital, ICT and Print**

date tbc

contact **Linda Broughton** at  
linda@ntileeds.co.uk

## **Health, Social Care and Early Years**

9.30am, 22nd February 2008

contact **Lynda Gatecliffe** at  
l.gatecliffe@bradford.ac.uk

## **Leadership, Management, Innovation and Enterprise**

2pm, 1st May 2008

contact **Michael Cuthbert** at  
m.cuthbert@wakefield.ac.uk

## Dates for your Diary:

IAG Task Group 4/3/08, Credit & Progression Task Group 8/4/08, Deadline for 2nd round of IAG Commissioning 18/4/08, SAF Meeting 21/4/08, Deadline for 2nd round of Progression Commissioning 28/4/08, Board Meeting 12/5/08.

## Let us know what you think?

We hope you have enjoyed this newsletter. We welcome your feedback on ways we can improve our communications and welcome any stories or case studies you would like to see included in further issues. Please send any comments to **Rachael Brough** at [r.j.brough@hud.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.brough@hud.ac.uk).