



## NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Autumn 2007 Update

The North West HLSP has continued to make considerable progress over the past months and the first employer led courses funded by the Pathfinder have now commenced. The major developments are summarised below.

### **Brokerage**

The database of provision is nearing completion with HEI and FEC information. This will then proceed through a period of testing with brokers and other intermediary organisations before being formally launched.

The HLSP team have now received 19 enquiries in total, 13 from the Train to Gain Skills Brokers and 6 from other partners such as the sector skills councils. These are increasing in regularity each month as the relationships between the Specialist Advisors and the Skills Brokers develop. A number of joint visits will take place over the coming weeks providing Skills Brokers with additional support in the early stages of higher level referrals. The Broker Training module will be delivered in the near future once a suitable date has been arranged.

The HLSP Team attended and presented at the Train to Gain Team Meeting on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. This provided an opportunity to brief all Skills Brokers on the support available to them through the HLSP team and to introduce colleagues to each other. Sector specific meetings between Advisors and Brokers are also ongoing. The HLSP Team are also currently developing material for the broker training website.

### **Development of Provision**

#### ***Round 1***

All projects funded in Round 1 have now signed their project contracts and the first payment has been made. Specialist Advisors are undertaking bi-monthly meetings with projects to monitor progress.

#### ***Round 2***

The second call for proposals within the Construction sector is now complete and HEIs and FECs have all been notified of the outcomes of the panel assessment. In total 7 proposals were received from HE providers and 2 proposals have been funded in 2 institutions. Wigan and Leigh College are developing delivery of their HNC in Construction. This will be delivered via blended learning due to demand from employers currently having to travel significant distances and resulting in a low retention rate on the course. The University of Salford are developing a Construction Site Training Simulator (CSTS) which will include some employer led modules funded by the HLSP.

Final approval letters have now been sent to the 2 funded projects following confirmation of some minor clarifications requested by the panel. The Construction sector is planning a third round of funding to be launched during November. This will take a more directed approach allowing HE providers to first submit expressions of interest against 6 detailed sector priorities. The panel will then agree which of these should progress to full bids and partners will work to support these providers in developing demand led proposals with significant employer engagement.

The second call for the Business and Professional Services sector was launched in July and the closing date for proposals is October 15<sup>th</sup>, the panel will then meet on October 26<sup>th</sup> to assess the bids and agree funding.

The Advanced Engineering and Materials (AEM) and Digital and Creative Industries sectors both launched their second call for proposals on September 15<sup>th</sup>. The AEM sector has only £110,000 remaining following a successful first round and therefore each Sector Skills Council (SSC) has identified one key priority at higher level around which proposals are requested. The closing date for proposals is December 14<sup>th</sup> and the panel will meet in January to assess the bids received.

The Digital and Creative panel are taking a two stage approach with expressions of interest, against 6 key priority areas for the SSCs, requested for October 2<sup>nd</sup>. The panel meets in mid October to agree which providers should progress to the full proposal stage which should be submitted by 26<sup>th</sup> November. The panel will then meet in December to agree allocations. During the development of the full proposals SSCs, NWDA and the HLSP team will work with providers to ensure the proposals have strong employer sign up, are demand led and meet the required criteria for the HLSP.

Further details on funding rounds in all sectors and relevant documentation can be found on the NWUA website at [www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/default.aspx](http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/default.aspx).

## **Other Activity**

### **Staffing**

On September 18<sup>th</sup> NWUA appointed 2 Sector Development Managers to work on a variety of sectoral activity including cluster engagement and HE-Business Interaction. One of these is Karen Lang,, currently Senior Officer in the HLSP Team. As part of this position Karen will undertake the role of Specialist Advisor for the AEM sector for two days a week, working closely with Claire Lowe who is part-time and works three days per week. Karen took up post on October 1<sup>st</sup>.

NWUA are now recruiting to fill the HLSP Senior Officer vacancy which has been advertised with a closing date towards the end of October.

### **HEFCE Evaluation**

HEFCE are appointing consultants to undertake an early evaluation of the three HLSPs. The evaluation will look at the models adopted by each Pathfinder and examine the effectiveness of each in meeting its aims. Colleagues from HEIs, Sector Skills Councils and other partners will be asked for their opinions as part of the process. NWUA has met with the consultants undertaking the study which is expected to be available early in the New Year.

### **Unionlearn**

The HLSP team have continued to work with unionlearn colleagues on issues around higher level learning for union members. Among work currently ongoing is the organisation of sector specific seminars for union learning representatives and employers to take place in the New Year and collaboration on developing an Information, Advice and Guidance project with unions and HEIs.

### **Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) Linkages**

The NW HLSP has been working closely with all 5 LLNs in the region. A strong partnership is now in place with Cumbria Higher Learning and HLSP Specialist Advisors are working alongside their sector groups to discuss potential proposals. Close links are also developing with the emerging Lancashire LLN and meetings between LLN colleagues and the HLSP have discussed the alignment of activities to avoid duplication and add value. Specialist Advisors continue to sit on the Greater Manchester Strategic Alliance Sector Groups to ensure close working and similar strong links are in place with the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire LLN around the Business and Professional and Digital and Creative sectors.

### **Foundation Degree Forward (FDF)**

The new FDF Regional Manager, Tony Donajgrodzki is based at the NWUA office in Manchester and is establishing close working links with the HLSP team. The new FDF Regional Business Plan for 2007-08 aligns closely with HLSP activity ensuring support for Foundation Degree developments. FDF and the HLSP are also working together on links to unionlearn, LLNs and Aimhigher to ensure coherence between HEFCE funded activity in the region.

The NW HLSP team are also working closely with the FDF Employment Based Training Accreditation (EBTA) project which aims to accredit employer's in house training. A partnership of HEIs and FECs interested in working with employers in this area has been established by FDF and the work is being led by Ken Phillips, based at the University of Central Lancashire. It has been agreed that if the EBTA team work with employers who are also seeking the development of new provision this will be referred to the HLSP team of Advisors and likewise if the HLSP Advisors work with employers who have non-accredited in house training referrals will be passed on to EBTA colleagues. For further details about EBTA, please contact Ken Philips, EBTA Manager, Foundation Degree Forward (fdf), Lichfield Centre, The Friary, Lichfield, Staffs, WS13 6QG

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### **Contact Us**

Previous updates are available on the NWUA website at [www.nwua.ac.uk](http://www.nwua.ac.uk) along with full details of the NW HLSP.

For further information please contact:

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