



## NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Update Spring 2008

It's been a busy few months for the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder (HLSP) team with the approval of a large number of projects by the sector panels this year. Work has continued on the development of the HLSP extension project in conjunction with NWDA. Discussions have also commenced regarding the extension of the unionlearn Regional Learning Fund to higher level skills, therefore further increasing employer engagement with skills provision.

### **BROKERAGE**

#### ***Referrals***

Referrals to the HLSP Specialist Advisors from Train to Gain Skills Brokers and other partners have continued at a steady rate over the last three months. To date NW Business Link through the Train to Gain service have had 395 higher level referrals, an exact breakdown of these referrals is expected soon, they estimate this to be approximately 4% of their total referrals. The Specialist Advisors are maintaining their engagement with Brokers and their sector specific activity with the aim of continuing to increase the numbers of higher level referrals.

#### ***Training***

The HLSP Team have maintained strong links with Train to Gain Brokers and have undertaken a number of joint visits and meetings. This has all supported the development of the Brokers knowledge of Higher Education. Another development day to a group of brokers will be delivered in June or July this year.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF PROVISION**

#### ***Funded Projects***

Overall, the HLSP has now funded 22 projects in total with 6 projects approved in Advanced Engineering and Materials, 7 in Digital and Creative Industries, 6 in Construction and 3 in Business and Professional sector. Four projects, one in each sector, funded in the early stages of the Pathfinder are now developed, have recruited learners and have started the delivery phase of the activity.

The newest project in the Advanced Engineering and Materials Sector will be led by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in partnership with key employers and other stakeholders in the nuclear sector to develop CPD provision in the Science and Technology of Nuclear Waste Management. Other latest additions to HLSP portfolio of funded projects include a Cultural Leadership CPD Programme at LJMU, a Foundation Degree in Building Services and Sustainable Engineering and a Postgraduate Certificate in People Management in Financial Services both at UCLan.

Following the Construction Sector Panel's recent meeting, it was agreed that 4 Expressions of Interest would progress to full bids. 16<sup>th</sup> May 2008 is the deadline for receipt of full bids.

Further details of projects successful in these areas will be available in the summer newsletter. Full details of the projects funded to date and current funding rounds are available on HLSP website at <http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/default.aspx>

### ***Future Funding Rounds***

Currently there are no further rounds of funding in the Advanced Engineering and Materials sector, Construction sector or the Digital and Creative Industries sector. There is currently a fourth round of funding in the Business and Professional Services sector with the deadline for receipt of proposals on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008. An application form and guidance notes can be found at

[http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/downloads\\_business\\_and\\_professional\\_services.aspx](http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/downloads_business_and_professional_services.aspx)

## **DATABASE OF PROVISION**

The pilot version of the database is now available aiming to provide an effective resource for Train to Gain Skills Brokers to have easy access to the wide range of HE provision available in the region. Rather than accessing different institutional websites, it is now possible to search for courses from various providers (HEIs and FECs) in one single place. The database will be regularly updated as new institutional data becomes available to include HE provision at all levels (HND/HNC, Foundation Degree, Honours Degree, Postgraduate Degree, CPD and short courses) currently offered in HEIs and FECs in the region.

An initial pilot has been completed within HLSP team and work is ongoing to make more refinements to this version and add in more institutional data available before an external piloting of the database in May. Feedback will be requested from the Skills Brokers and colleagues in SSCs, HEIs, FECs, LSC and NWDA. It is hoped that the database will then be publically launched in July.

## **NORTH WEST REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY FUNDING**

A full proposal was submitted to NWDA in mid-February and is currently proceeding through the approval process. The proposal will extend the sectors covered by the HLSP to include Energy and Environmental Technologies, Food and Drink and Biomedical. The project will also allow the funding of any provision at level 4 and above rather than being restricted to HEFCE funded provision as with the current work. NWUA have already been establishing contacts with regional partners and relevant Sector Skills Councils working in these new sectors, an initial analysis of the skills needs at higher level for these sectors is also being undertaken. This will ensure a rapid start to activity if the proposal receives approval.

## **UNIONLEARN**

### ***HE Regional Learning Fund***

NWUA has been in discussions recently with unionlearn regarding extending the Regional Learning Fund to include HE level activity. To date projects funded through this work have focused on lower level skills activity within unions and colleagues at unionlearn are keen to expand this to cover higher level skills. Currently initial ideas are being drawn together by NWUA and unionlearn for discussion with HEFCE regarding funding. There is particular interest in ensuring that union members are aware of HE opportunities via union learning representatives in workplaces and aggregating the demand for HE provision in different sectors.

### ***Showcasing Progression in the Workplace Conference***

NWUA, through the Higher Level Skills Pathfinder, in partnership with unionlearn and FDF held an information event focusing on opportunities and progression into Higher Education at the Think Lab, University of Salford on 13<sup>th</sup> March. The event was attended by around 40 delegates who were primarily union learning representatives (ULRs), responsible for promoting learning in the workplace. The Specialist Advisors held sector specific workshops to discuss higher education opportunities in their sectors, identify the issues and barriers which might be encountered and explore their capacity to deliver appropriate IAG.

More details of the event including copies of presentations are available on the HLSP website at [http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/event\\_unionlearn\\_workshop.aspx](http://www.nwua.ac.uk/pathfinder/event_unionlearn_workshop.aspx)

### **FDF LINKAGES**

During February NWUA, through the HLS Pathfinder team, and FDF held two events focusing on policy and activity development following the Leitch Review of Skills. The first event was held in Preston on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February and speakers included Hugh Tollyfield, Special Advisor on Employer Engagement, HEFCE and Prof. Patrick McGhee, Deputy Vice Chancellor, UCLan. Case studies showcasing HLSP funded developments were given by Liverpool John Moores University and Liverpool Community College and UCLan. The second event held on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> February at the University of Manchester followed a similar theme with speakers from DIUS, University of Salford, Manchester Enterprises, MANCAT and FDF. Details are available at [http://www.nwua.ac.uk/newsevents/leitech\\_101207.aspx](http://www.nwua.ac.uk/newsevents/leitech_101207.aspx) including a report of the events and copies of all presentations.

### **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:

Virginia Mitchell, HLSP, NWUA on [vmitchell@nwua.ac.uk](mailto:vmitchell@nwua.ac.uk) or 0161 234 0431