

## **Protocol between NWUA Higher Level Skills Pathfinder/North West Learning and Skills Council**

This protocol sets out how we can use **Train to Gain** as a framework for achieving joint organisational aims.

The agreement has been developed between North West Learning and Skills Council and The North West Universities Association in the North West

The North West Higher Level Skills Pathfinder (NW HLSP) is one of three pilot projects funded by the HEFCE as part of their employer engagement activity. The NW HLSP is being led by the North West Universities Association (NWUA), as the representative body of the fifteen North West Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in partnership with the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA), Government Office North West (GONW), the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and the NW Regional Skills Partnership (RSP).

On November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 the HEFCE Board gave their approval of the NW Higher Level Skills Pathfinder Business Plan and for funding for this activity from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 - 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009. NW HLSP activity will be across the entire region and will involve all HE providers offering HEFCE funded provision.

The NW HLSP is an innovative project which looks to increase employer engagement with the HE sector in the North West in order to increase the investment in and take up of higher level skills within the NW workforce. The main aims of the NW HLSP are to:

- Increase demand from employers for higher level skills provision
- Increase employer engagement with skills provision in HEIs and FECs
- Increase the capacity of HEIs and FECs to respond to employer demand for higher level skills and embed work-force development in HE strategies
- Test the level of investment employers are prepared to contribute for development and delivery of this provision
- Disseminate best practice identified through the NW Model which could be rolled out to other regions

The HLSP in the Northwest will initially focus its activities across 4 sectors

- Advanced Engineering and Materials
- Creative and Digital Industries
- Business and Professional Services
- Construction

Each sector is lead by a Specialist Adviser who will be expected to work closely with Skills Brokers to identify higher level skills provision which will meet employer needs. Where activity does not currently exist to meet demand provision will be commissioned, appraised and sanctioned through a Sector Panel which currently meets bi-monthly. Advisers will work closely with Higher and Further Education Institutions in the northwest

to ensure that Skills Brokers gain the knowledge and understanding of the Higher Level Skills offer and how this can be accessed by employers. Where appropriate, Advisers will discuss employer requirements when brokered in by the Skills Broker

Train to Gain is based on highly successful Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) that have been running since 2003. Through these pilots, more than 27,000 employers have already benefited from the advice and guidance of Skills Brokers, enabling them to find and fund training that has met their business objectives. More than 90% of employers were extremely satisfied with the service and the way it focused on their needs.

The Core Train to Gain service will comprise :

- Support from a Skills Broker working to national standards
- Access to LSC fully funded programmes – Skills for Life ; NVQ Level 2 and Apprenticeships ( 16-18 Apprenticeships and new Adult Apprenticeships )
- Information, advice and guidance to employees
- Limited wage subsidies for employers of less than 50 people

Flexible elements of the Train to Gain service include :

- Integrated employer and LSC support for higher level learning programmes including Foundation Degrees and Higher Level Skills Pathfinders
- Support for Leadership and Management Training
- Bespoke training packages paid for by employers
- Investors in People
- Learning opportunities via Connexions for 16/17 year olds
- The Jobcentre Plus employer offer

In the interest of a consistent and high level of service this protocol should be observed by HLSP Advisers and Train to Gain Brokers.

**NWUA agrees to :**

- ensure its Advisers are fully aware of the Train to Gain offer and the support it can provide to employers
- provide information on Train to Gain to Advisers and the wider HE community in the northwest through briefing events etc and
- refer appropriate employers to the Train to Gain help line (0845 602 0062)
- establish clear communication with NWDA broker organisation in the region to ensure referrals are effectively made both to and from HLSP Advisers

- provide the NWDA broker organisation with point of contacts in the region to either provide a direct line of communication or through which communications can be channelled
- work with LSC and NWDA brokerage organisation to develop joint marketing strategies and opportunities to ensure a consistent message, avoid duplication of efforts and manage employer expectations
- share with the NWDA brokerage organisation any information and feedback from employers with regard to key issues relating to the Train to Gain Brokerage service

**LSC Train to Gain Brokers agree to :**

1. to understand the remit and scope of the HLSP and the support role the Advisers provide to employers
2. refer appropriate employers to HLSP Advisers
3. Establish clear communication with HSLP within the region to ensure referrals are effectively made both to and from HLSP.
4. Provide HLSP Advisers with points of contact in the region to either give answers directly or through which answers may be obtained
5. Share with HLSP information and feedback from employers with regard to key issues relating to HLSP

NWUA and the Learning and Skills Council agree to review the Protocol as the service and offer develops

### HLSP Employer Referral Form

This form is to be completed by a Train to Gain Skills Broker (with the consent of the employer) and passed on to the appropriate HLSP Adviser for action. HLSP to acknowledge receipt via e-mail within 24 hours. HLSP to contact employer within 72 hours..

Broker name and contact details	
Date of employer contact (by broker)	
Name of HLSP Adviser and contact details to whom the referral is being made	
Employer's name & address	
Employer's Unique ID No. (where known)	
Telephone number	
Employer contact name	
Job title	
Reason for HLSP Adviser contact	

Please complete this section and return to the Broker email address

*Date of contact with employer* *Did you arrange a visit* *YES/NO*

*Date of visit to employer*

*Were you able to offer support?* *YES/NO*

*Nature of support*

*HLSP name and contact details*

**Broker Employer Referral Form from HLSP**

This form is to be completed by a HLSP Adviser (with the consent of the employer) and passed on to the regional brokerage service for action. Brokerage service to acknowledge receipt via e-mail within 24 hours. Broker to contact employer within 72 hours)

Date of employer contact by HLSP when referral to Train to Gain was discussed	
HLSP Adviser name	
Employer's name & address	
Telephone number	
Employer contact name	
Job title	
Reason for Train to Gain Skills Brokerage contact	

Please complete this section and return to the HLSP Adviser email address

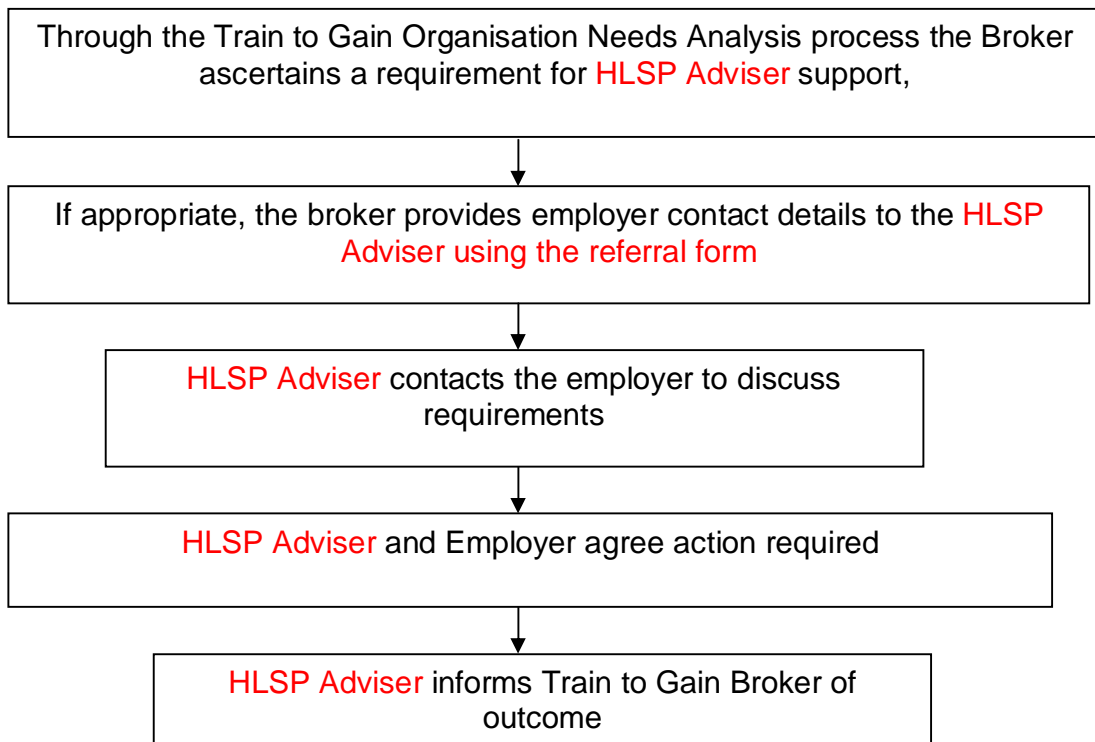
*Date of contact with employer* \_\_\_\_\_ *Did you arrange a visit* \_\_\_\_\_ *YES/NO*

*Date of visit to employer* \_\_\_\_\_

*Were you able to offer support?* \_\_\_\_\_ *YES/NO*

*Nature of broker support*

### **Broker Referral to HLSP Adviser**



### **HLSP Adviser Referral to Broker**

