

the area

Your newsletter from London West Learning and Skills Council

National HR Development Award

Hounslow Primary Care Trust (PCT) won the prestigious Human Resources Development in Primary Care Award at this year's Excellence in Strategic HRM Awards ceremony.

Sponsored by *The Guardian* newspaper, the national competition seeks to recognise and reward examples of best practice within the National Health Service.

Shaheen Hamid, Practice Manager at Grove Park Surgery in Chiswick, said: 'Recruiting and retaining high-calibre receptionists for GP practices in Hounslow was becoming very difficult.

Skills shortage

'To address this growing skills shortage, we initiated an accredited pre-employment training programme with London West LSC, the North West London NHS Workforce Development Confederation and Jane Goodwin Associates, a partner in the Information, Advice and Guidance network.

'The free 10-week course was designed to attract local unemployed people, particularly parents returning to work. Training on and off the job was used to develop candidates' skills and employability as receptionists.

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Shaheen Hamid (third from left) and members of the winning Hounslow PCT team

'Of the 14 people who took part in the course, 12 have now secured employment as GP receptionists, while the other two have gone on to full-time education – a great success rate!'

Hands-on experience

Cindy Heslington, now working at Dr Hughes and Partners' practice in Chiswick, is full of praise for the course. She said: 'I hadn't worked for 10 years, due to bringing up my children, but the course gave me a lot of confidence.

'It was a great help and gave me the knowledge and hands-on experience I needed to become a Medical Receptionist. I would without a doubt recommend this course to anyone wishing to join this field.'

Success through partnership

The new Skills Centre at Feltham is the result of a unique partnership between London West LSC, West Thames College, BAA Heathrow, London Borough of Hounslow and local schools – Longford Community School and Feltham Community College.

A strong ethos of 'opportunity, partnership and success' has already made its mark on the de Brome building, home to the pioneering, state-of-the-art Skills Centre. Run by West Thames College in partnership

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StAR update

The London West Strategic Area Review (StAR) is now well under way and substantial progress has already been made.

Communication with stakeholders is an essential feature of the StAR process. An event in early November, *Influencing the Future of Learning*, enabled almost 100 London West stakeholders from a wide range of sectors to learn more about the StAR process and how they can participate. London West LSC is also working with a number of established groups and partners across the local area to involve and update them on StAR and other Government strategies.

Other key communication tools have been developed, including a short video, jointly produced for the London LSCs, and a dedicated web site with regular updates on the StAR process (www.londonwest.org/star).

The five London LSCs are collaborating to develop a transparent and consistent approach to information gathering and analysis. To this end, in late September the London West StAR Stakeholder Group approved a Common Review Framework, along with the local StAR Delivery Plan.

Additional StAR highlights include these achievements:

- The London West Needs Assessment 2003 has now been published (see related article)
- Data and information gathered from the London Employer Survey 2002 – commissioned by the five London LSCs along with the London Development Agency, Business Link for London and Jobcentre Plus – will form a

baseline for the StAR process and assist with planning

- Information has been gathered on accredited learning by levels of study (www.inflow.org.uk)
- Area Inspections – the post-Inspection Action Plan for Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham provides a sound platform for collaborative working and the delivery of flexible, high-quality provision for all young people in the area. London West LSC is also working with the London boroughs of Hounslow, Harrow and Hillingdon to put in place an appropriate system and infrastructure for future Area Inspections
- London West LSC has received all its providers' three-year Development Plans. These plans are high-level strategic documents centred on improving the effectiveness of teaching and responding better to employer needs
- As part of the *Success for All* strategy, all colleges and providers funded by the LSC will have reviewed their purpose or mission by the end of April 2004.

Latest picture

London West LSC's 2003 Needs Assessment takes a fresh look at provision across the area.

The new document, which covers the 2002/03 academic year, presents a comprehensive appraisal of the learning provision funded by the LSC, along with details of outcomes. The LSC's Head of Research, Martin Freedman, commented: 'The 2003 Needs Assessment analyses the latest Census results, which confirm that there is an extremely diverse population within London West.'

'The Assessment includes, for the first time, a map to show where training, partnership and economic growth are coinciding. There's also a new section focusing on access and social inclusion, which looks at how unemployment, deprivation and lack of Basic Skills are holding back particular groups who we would like to engage in learning and employment.'

Richard Cameron, Economic Data Analyst at the LSC, added: 'The latest Needs Assessment

Comment

Welcome to the seventh issue, the first of 2004! I wish you all a happy and prosperous new year.

Figures recently released by DFES show that London West has one of the highest increases in pupil count for 2003 in the country. Participation in the area increased by almost 7% year on year, with Brent, Hounslow and Ealing showing significant increases of 13%, 8% and 7.5% respectively. Retention rates have also shown a steady rise.

These increases are a tangible result of the combined efforts of partners and providers to continually improve learning provision in our area by offering a vibrant and diverse learning environment for our learners.

We have included a readership survey with this issue. Please take a few minutes to complete and return it. We will use it to guide future editorial content.

Also enclosed is information about the launch of our new Champions of Learning Awards. Please enter and encourage nominations, and join us in celebrating learning achievement.

Peter Pledger
Executive Director

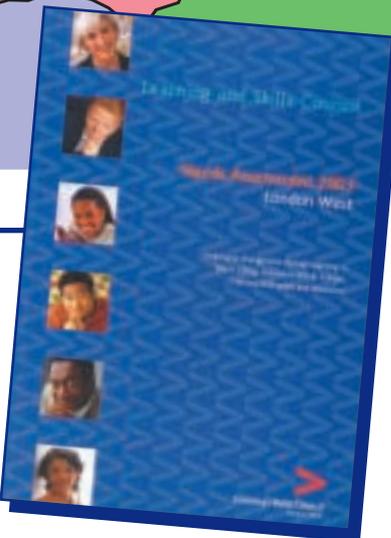
Hounslow Area Inspection

An Area Inspection will take place in Hounslow over two separate weeks, commencing 9 February and 15 March 2004.

London West LSC is working with its partners and the Local Education Authority to prepare for the Inspection and post-Inspection activities, including the production and implementation of a post-

Inspection Action Plan. A 14-19 strategic group met for the first time and is co-chaired by Hounslow LEA and London West LSC.

For further information, contact Girma Ejere at the LSC (girma.ejere@lsc.gov.uk) or visit the Area Inspection website www.londonwest.org/area_inspection/index.htm



Speaking up for local businesses

West London Business offers a voice for organisations large and small across the local area. We asked Chief Executive Kate Ashton to provide an employers' perspective on education and skills.

‘ We work with local businesses of all sizes, helping them identify their needs, lobbying on their behalf and creating business-to-business opportunities. We are also currently working with other key agencies to develop an economic strategy for the local area.

The employers' view about skills and education can be summarised in the familiar scenes of wanting specific solutions in the form of short, sharp, cost-effective support which addresses today's skills shortage. They do take the skills shortage very seriously but are often unable to spend valuable time and resources looking solely at long-term gain; there also has to be some immediate business benefit involved.

Our employer members are very aware of the changing nature of skills needs. They know that the industry base of the local area is evolving, with rising star sectors including Food and Manufacturing, Service Industries and the Media. They also appreciate that with 27% of London West residents born outside the EU (source: 2001 Census), the need for Skills for Life and English for Speakers of Other Languages training is becoming increasingly important. West London Business is working with agencies like the LSC and Business Link for London to address these issues.

On behalf of employers, we welcome the Government White Paper *21st Century Skills: realising*

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Kate Ashton offers a voice for London West's businesses

our potential. In particular, we value the commitment it makes to: free learning to Level 2 for people in the workforce or of working age; an accumulation credit framework for learning; removing the upper age limit for Modern Apprenticeships; and reviewing ICT as a third basic skill. Popular initiatives like Bite Size, Individual Learning Accounts and the Employer Training Pilot all show that government agencies do recognise employers' issues, but swift implementation into mainstream delivery is needed.

Here at West London Business, we value the LSC as a key strategic partner with whom we are working to turn initiatives like the StAR and the sub-regional strategy into reality. We are also working with the LSC to find ways of conveying the key messages about the Skills Strategy to employers – for example, Executive Director Peter Pledger recently spoke at a West London Business members' event, sponsored by the LSC. ’

also provides lots of new information about the many different types of business currently operating in the local area, along with their skills requirements. It focuses on two local manufacturing sub-sectors in particular – Engineering (a priority sector for London West) and Food and Drink – and distils those aspects of the Pan London Employers Survey that are most relevant to London West.'

The Needs Assessment can be downloaded from the London West LSC website (www.londonwest.org).

Meet our new Council Member

Welcome to Tim Houghton, Executive Director at Groundwork West London, who has joined London West LSC as a Council Member.

Having spent the past 12 years at Groundwork, a charitable trust involved in bringing about social regeneration and economic improvement through projects focused on business and training, Tim is well placed to represent the voluntary and community sector on the Council.

'There's a lot of correlation between the LSC and Groundwork,' Tim explained. 'We share many of the same objectives, so I am delighted that the LSC is embracing wider partnership work and actively encouraging input from our sector.'

'I intend to be a voice for the voluntary and community sector, to help make the link between government strategy and what actually happens on the

ground in terms of delivery and service improvement.

'I believe that everyone has the capacity and talent to do something. This won't always stem from academic success and the onus is on us to reach out to some of the most excluded people in our area, harness that talent and give them the opportunity to develop. I want to be able to give them a chance to achieve their potential and become part of the mainstream economy. I'm looking forward to working with the LSC to achieve this.'

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EMPLOYERS

McVitie's training boost

A large-scale training programme has commenced at the McVitie's site in Harlesden, supported by a promise of £1.2 million core funding from London West LSC, along with a further £200,000 from the London Development Agency.

Following a successful bid to manufacture Mini Cheddars (a £43 million brand currently growing at a rate of 15% a year) and roll wrap Hob Nobs at the McVitie's factory in Harlesden, more than 200 new jobs will be created during the next three years.

The new expanded workforce will enable the 101-year-old manufacturing site, already the largest biscuit factory in Europe and the third largest in the world, to raise its annual production levels by 33% to 100,000 tonnes.

A big opportunity

Factory General Manager Andy Readshaw sees workforce development as the key to future success. He said: 'Although our in-house training and development schemes are very good, we have no apprenticeship schemes currently in place, and limited opportunities for our people to take national qualifications – clearly a big opportunity.'

'A comprehensive workforce development programme incorporating nationally recognised qualifications and additional training time will



make a massive difference, and one that will eventually enable us to significantly outperform our competition on safety, quality, service and cost.'

LSC Further Education (FE) Employer Engagement Manager Neill Scott helped to bring to life Andy's aspirations for workforce development by matching them with a menu of vocational learning opportunities including Modern Apprenticeships, National Vocational Qualifications and Basic Skills training. 'It was important to minimise the prohibitive costs involved in releasing people to train off-site,' Neill commented. 'This was not an easy task to achieve, with the factory operating a 24-hour day and staff working rotational shift patterns. But through brokerage, and with the help of our local provider base and FE colleges, we have been able to build a fully responsive package that meets the client's need.'

Unlocking people's potential

The roll-out of the new workforce development programme to the first 'batch' of Mini Cheddars recruits has already commenced. By the end of 2006, the programme will have been extended across the remainder of the site.

Andy concluded: 'Without continuous learning and development, we will not have a fully engaged, motivated and competent workforce delivering to the best of its ability. I am confident that this training programme will be the key to unlocking people's potential, improving factory performance levels and creating a competitive advantage for McVitie's.'

'In the longer term, I believe Harlesden can become a Food Manufacturing Centre of Excellence. McVitie's will then have a big role to play in providing a training model that other food manufacturers in the local area can access.'

A united front

Led by the LSC, London West's six borough councils have formed a unique partnership to provide improved training and development opportunities for their workforces.

At an October event, the LSC encouraged members of local authorities to join the newly-formed London West Local Authority Workforce Development Network, which aims to identify workforce development training needs across the local area and to formulate a strategy to address them.

By creating a strategic group to help tackle key workforce development issues across the six boroughs, the new Network will enable its members to meet many of the requirements laid out in the *Pay and Workforce Strategy for Local Government* White Paper issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Employers' Organisation in September.

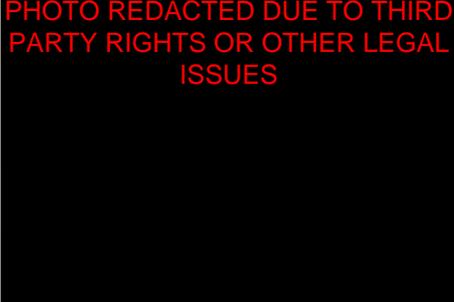
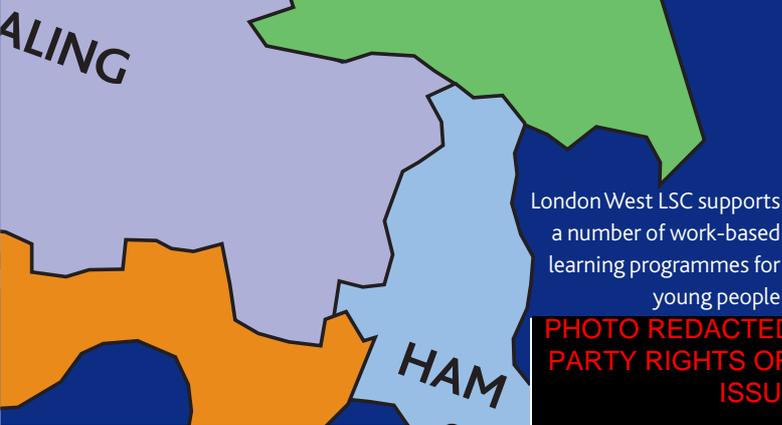
A number of workforce development needs are common to all local authorities, including Basic Skills training, management development and improving recruitment and retention. There are currently 700,000 people working within London West. Around one in five has Basic Skills

needs, and around one in 10 is employed in local government.

So delegates at the event were not altogether surprised to hear Geoff Alltimes, Managing Director of Hammersmith & Fulham Council, say: 'I speak on behalf of the chief executives of the six boroughs when I say that we have a fundamental skills shortage to cover the jobs we need to do, while at the same time trying to modernise our services, improve our use of technology and address our whole approach to customer care.'

Menu of support

To help tackle these issues head on, London West LSC has created a 'menu of support' for local authorities. Take-up in all areas has been good, according to the LSC's Workforce Development Team Leader, Harjit Hunjan: 'Already three local authorities have contacted us to organise a review of their Skills for Life strategies, which will be conducted by the Basic Skills Agency and specialist providers. This review will include a Skills for Life Roadshow to raise awareness among key personnel.'



Raising awareness

The results of a survey carried out on behalf of London's LSCs reveal that, when asked why they did not offer jobs to young people, more than 40% of London West employers did not know, while 39% cited lack of experience and relevant skills as their reason.

London West LSC is currently working with employers to raise awareness about the importance of staff development and the funding available from the LSC to support this. Employers are being approached, by phone and mail, to set up appointments to discuss their training needs and how LSC funding can assist.

Responsible for planning and funding Post-16 education and training provision, the LSC supports a number of work-based learning programmes for young people, including Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Entry to Employment and Skills for Life. Training is delivered through partners and providers contracted to the LSC.

Stephanie Scott, 18, is one of five MAs taken on by Sabre Holdings, a global leader in travel commerce. She said: 'I wanted to work in a secretarial role with a global organisation in the

travel industry, and this is what I have been able to do. Being in a work environment has boosted my confidence. This educational route was the best one for me because I was paid while I was learning and, more importantly, I gained the valuable work experience I needed.' Stephanie has since completed her NVQ Level 2, along with the key skills portfolio of her Foundation MA, and has accepted a job offer – incorporating an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship – with American Airlines Cargo.

A fresh approach

Philip Maddock, Senior Human Resources Officer at Sabre Holdings, is very much in favour of the MA programme. He said: 'Young people bring energy and a fresh approach to business, particularly large ones like ours. They bring a different kind of enthusiasm. Business has a responsibility to society. Programmes such as Modern Apprenticeship help us to focus on the importance of this responsibility by working with young people in the local community and giving them valuable skills that will prepare them for the world of work.'

European Route to Skills

The LSC-funded Route to Skills programme, run by Harrow in Business, has so far helped more than 400 local people to improve their Skills for Life. A European delegation from five countries came to Brent to find out more.

Delegates visited the Bestway Group, based at Park Royal, to find out more about how the programme works in practice and to meet beneficiaries of literacy and numeracy training. The trip was co-funded by London West LSC to promote the sharing of knowledge across international boundaries.

Duncan Lamb, External Programmes Manager at Harrow in Business, the enterprise agency

running the training, said: 'The delegates particularly enjoyed seeing how the company had taken ownership of the training ethos built into the Route to Skills programme. They were impressed at how much the beneficiaries had learned in a relatively short space of time.'

Stephen Bantin, Workforce Development Adviser at the LSC, said: 'We are pleased to be working in partnership with Harrow in Business to fund the Route to Skills programme. Its success is clearly reflected by the fact that our European neighbours are interested in learning more about it and developing similar programmes in their own countries.'

Success through partnership

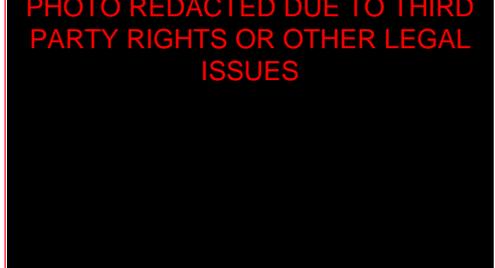
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with London Borough of Hounslow, the Centre was opened on 8 September 2003 to address the skills shortages and meet the need for vocational training provision within the Feltham community.

The Skills Centre offers vocational training to help young people and adults attain nationally recognised qualifications while gaining practical skills for jobs in the building and construction trades, engineering, catering, hairdressing and motor vehicle maintenance. The courses are designed to prepare students for employment and apprenticeships, or progression on to further study.

Demand for courses at the Centre has been high from the outset – places were filled well before the main enrolment period began. Around 165 young people and adults attend on a full-time basis and a further 135 14-year-olds from local schools currently attend for a day's training every week.

Annie Lazare, Skills Centre Manager, described the take-up by students and the atmosphere at the College as 'fantastic'. She said: 'I personally feel that being skilled is undervalued in terms of how people describe themselves. There's always a huge amount of praise for young people who get academic qualifications and not nearly enough for those who gain vocational ones. I like the fact that we focus on vocational education and on helping students to learn in an environment where skills are considered important.'



At the Skills centre launch: Rod Kenyon, Chair of London West LSC; Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer; and Peter Pledger

Driving up standards

London West LSC launched a brand new support unit at the start of October, designed to ensure that work-based learning achieves parity with traditional Further Education (FE) courses as a Post-16 learning option.

The London West Provider Support Unit is a unique initiative conceived and developed by the LSC to offer more support to learning providers.

Clare Arnold, Director of Operations and Quality at the LSC, explained: 'The demands of the Common Inspection Framework and the *Success for All* strategy have resulted in a drive to raise the quality of teaching and learning across the board, as well as to place all training provision on a firmer business footing.

'All too often, work-based learning providers are seen as the poor relation of FE colleges, who tend to have far larger budgets and a greater resource base to access new developments in teaching and assessment methods.

'The new Support Unit will help redress this balance by enabling learning providers to develop a robust business strategy, incorporating structured training programmes for staff.

Providers will also be able to access up-to-date developments in the learning arena, and to share good practice.'

Andy Colley, Head of Provider Contracting at the LSC, added: 'The tender to manage the new Support Unit was won by Mindset, a training organisation that in recent years has built up an impressive resource of toolkits designed to help providers deliver learning effectively.'

Mindset's Director Simon Shaw is confident of his organisation's ability to achieve improvements in the quality and range of work-based learning in London West, retention and achievement figures, and employer commitment. He said: 'There's some evidence that providers are turning the corner in terms of the quality of their provision and the successes they achieve with learners. Our aim is to capture the best practice out there and make sure that providers in London West can learn from it.

'We'll also be working with partners, including employers, to increase the availability of high quality opportunities for work-based learning available in the area.'

November saw the launch of a new initiative designed to help more young people in West London than ever before enjoy the benefits of a university education.

Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression brings together local universities, colleges, schools and advice agencies in a concerted effort to help open the way to degree level study for young people whose families have no history of higher education.

With employers increasingly requiring people with degree level skills, the Government is committed to enabling 50% of young people to experience higher education by 2010. London West is already on track to meet that target, but a university education still seems a daunting and remote prospect for too many young people in the area.

Through summer schools, mentoring schemes and subject taster days, the Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression initiative, equally supported by the LSC and HEFCE (the funding body for higher education), will reach out to gifted but disadvantaged young learners. The hope is that some of these young people – and adults – will be motivated to continue their studies, with university as their goal.

The LSC's prime task will be to ensure that such aspirations extend equally to those who have chosen a vocational or work-based route. With new vocational Foundation Degrees now coming on-stream, universities will increasingly be opening their doors not just to those who have done well in their A-levels but to high-calibre work-based learners and Modern Apprentices.

For more information about Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression call Jehan Khan on 020 8231 2460.

ImpAct sells out!

Students in Year 9 and Year 11 need to have a firm understanding of the various learning options available to them. Once again London West LSC has commissioned the ImpAct theatre group to help deliver key messages about learning options to young people.

The all-new *Stay in Learning Show 2003* is proving to be a massive hit with Year 11 students throughout London West. Each of the 60 shows available was snapped up by local schools. Demand turned out to be so high that a further 10 shows had to be booked for January 2004.

Using a lively, contemporary format designed to appeal to its youthful audience, the show explains the importance of staying on in learning and the different routes available to students, including Entry to Employment, National Vocational Qualifications, A and AS levels,

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Modern Apprenticeships and higher education.

Maria Vaughan, Social Inclusion Curriculum Manager at Longford Community School, said: 'Our students really enjoyed the Year 11 show. As usual, the material was relevant to them and the actors worked well with the audience. It helped them find out more about Connexions and what to study next.'

Ell Lamb, Personal Adviser at CfBT Connexions – Hounslow, commented: 'I thought the show was very entertaining and very well-performed.'

Following a pilot exercise in Brent aimed at informing Year 9 students and their parents/guardians about the importance of having a broad-based education, the LSC has also organised a Year 9 ImpAct tour to cover all six London West boroughs with two different shows – one for the students and one for the parents – from January to March 2004.

To book a Year 9 show please contact Clare Mitchell at ImpAct on 08700 111288.

Working with young people: BEARS Youth Challenge

Support is the glue factor

Two innovative projects are helping many of London West's disengaged young people find a route back into training and employment: **Entry to Employment (E2E) at Feltham Community College and TurningPoint.**

Strong impact

The E2E programme, funded by London West LSC, brings together vocational training, life skills and personal development for young people who need help to get back into learning and, ultimately, to secure a job. Providers across the local area are working hard to deliver an exciting and innovative training experience designed to make a strong impact on their youthful audience.

Fiona Wilson is leading the E2E programme at **Feltham Community College.** Two dozen 16 to 24-year-olds previously disengaged from learning and employment started her course in September 2003. She said: 'We offer a tailor-made training and long-term workplace programme for every learner that will enable them to progress to the next stage of their training and/or employment. By working in small groups, we are able to provide a high level of personal attention to young people coming to us from Futures (a programme for those leaving care), youth offending teams and Connexions.'

'Tough love'

In a radical new approach, the LSC has also embarked on a partnership with Head to Head Training, BEARS Youth Challenge, Bigga Fish and Gateway Technology Centre, designed to reach out to young people in some of the most deprived areas in London West. This **TurningPoint** partnership is also helping many small training providers to develop the management systems necessary for them to comply with their LSC contract.

'Tough love' is the best way to describe this innovative project. Official streetwalkers from BEARS source their young learners from the streets, late at night. Then, having signed up to the programme, the young people are collected from their homes each morning by a BEARS streetwalker and escorted to the training centre, where they receive extensive pastoral support, along with training in Skills for Life, music production and ICT.

Sonia Green, Executive Director of Head to Head Training, said: 'Continuous, intensive pastoral support is the glue factor that binds the hardest-to-reach young people to the TurningPoint project. Whichever partner the learner goes to, the support goes with them, and that's why it works so well.'

Neera's self-portrait comes top!

Park High School student Neera Maroo is the latest winner of London West LSC's Art from Schools competition, which featured art from schools in Harrow. The competition is designed to give students in the six local boroughs an opportunity to display their work at the LSC's offices in Hounslow.

Neera, whose artwork was on display throughout the summer, said: 'I painted a self-portrait and built upon it using things that are an influence on my life. I included symbolism from my religion and ancient Egypt. I also put in script in the style of my favourite film, *The Matrix*.'

Also from Park High School, Hafiz Naderi was awarded second place for his painting of a Spanish pub sign. Third place went to Stef Agar of Shaftesbury High School for her striking Clay Head sculpture.

LSC Executive Director Peter Pledger was impressed by the complexity of ideas shown in Neera's winning entry. He commented: 'It illustrates the diversity of the people we have living and working in London West.'

Artwork from Hammersmith & Fulham secondary schools is currently on display.

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Peter Pledger with prize-winning artists Neera Maroo and Hafiz Naderi

Teaching the teachers

More than 80 teachers and partners in education improved their knowledge of the legislation and good practice needed to run work-related programmes in school at a workshop organised by Education Business Links London West.

In London West, more than 11,000 students a year undertake work experience. Funded jointly by the LSC and GlaxoSmithKline, the workshop clarified the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the implementation of the work-related curriculum.

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ESF in action

The European Social Fund (ESF) was established to raise participation and achievement in learning, improve the quality of education and training, and break down barriers to facilitate access to learning and employment.

London West LSC has an ESF budget of £17.5 million over two years. A total of 57 ESF projects are being supported under round one. In addition, the LSC is in contract negotiations with 54 providers to deliver 60 projects, with a total value of £7,697,845, for the second round of the discretionary ESF.

Heritage Ceramics, based in Southall, has been providing education and training services in visual arts and vocational crafts since 1984. Funding from the ESF, provided by London West LSC, is enabling 60 young ex-offenders from Hammersmith & Fulham, Hounslow and Ealing to learn the skills needed for them to lead a more active and productive community life.

Heritage Project Co-ordinator Tony Ogogo said: 'Many of our trainees have not benefited from a conventional education. We use visual arts and crafts as a vehicle through which they can start to acquire important behavioural and interpersonal skills. This in turn empowers them to break free from the offending cycle and become fully integrated within the local community, which could be through entering employment, pursuing a visual arts career, going on to do further studies or undertaking voluntary work.'

Winners!

Many thanks to everyone who responded to London West LSC's employer and stakeholder surveys, which were carried out by Marsden Grant.

The lucky survey prize draw winners were:

- Mr C Surnam, Greensleeves Trust
- Ms C Oldman, Raleigh International
- Mr J McGregor, Rohlig UK
- Mr V Amin, ABI Associates Ltd
- Ms A Brown, Brent & Harrow Work Experience Consortium
- Mr K Bartholomew, Heathrow Airport Ltd
- Mr A Verma, Southall Regeneration Partnership
- Ms G Bal, Wembley High Technology College.

Spreading good practice

Having achieved full Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) status for Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Electrical Installations to add to its provisional CoVE award for Construction, the College of North West London (CNWL) is busy upgrading its facilities, spreading good practice and strengthening links with local employers.

Delighted to receive the CoVE funding injection, Development Manager Tony Fleming said: 'We have been able to upgrade our equipment and classrooms to create first class learning environments where we can deliver programmes more fully and more quickly. For example, the control apparatus in our state-of-the-art "digital village" can replicate what happens in industry for the benefit of our students, who are clearly bowled over by the fantastic new facilities on offer.'

Working in partnership

The CoVE is spreading good practice within CNWL and to other colleges through the British Association of Construction Heads and the National Forum for Engineering in Colleges (BACH/NFEC) initiative, as well as being active in the national CoVE network. Frank Horan, Head of the Faculty of Technology, is an educational member of the Construction Industry Council and is heavily involved with many Sector Skills Councils.

The College has a substantial On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) contract with the LSC. OSAT provides an excellent route for spreading good practice, enabling the College to engage employers and work in partnership with them to develop effective work-based training that responds to their changing needs. As part of this, employer-based personnel are being

trained at supervisory and management level so that they can assess the performance of their staff and feed the results back to the College – the ideal way of completing the information loop.

Industry links

Recently, the College ran a highly successful specialist short course for 22 graduates who are now permanently employed as assistant site engineers at Terminal 5 (T5). Retaining close links with major contractors involved in the Heathrow T5 and Wembley Stadium projects ensures the accurate review and development of provision. Paul Gandy, Managing Director of major Wembley contractor Multiplex, said: 'Maintenance is the type of business that needs its own directly employed and highly skilled technicians – indeed, exactly the skills being developed by the CNWL through its designation as a CoVE.'

The commitment to employer engagement is very strong, as Tony explains: 'We chair termly focus groups with employers to find out which areas of the curriculum we should be focusing on in order to address their needs. For example, we have increased provision for plumbing by 39% over the last two years.'

'We also operated a pilot centre last year for the new City & Guilds professional programmes, and now have a group of students working towards foundation degrees, having previously completed programmes in plumbing, electrical installation and general construction.'

The LSC's Head of Strategic Planning, Priya Gossain concluded: 'The CoVE is helping to bridge the skills gap in our area by ensuring that the supply side of training delivery is meeting employer needs.'

If you have changed your address, have some article ideas to put forward for future issues of *the area* or require additional copies, please contact us on 0845 019 4164.



EUROPEAN UNION
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© January 2004 London West LSC Ref: 312/12/03

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