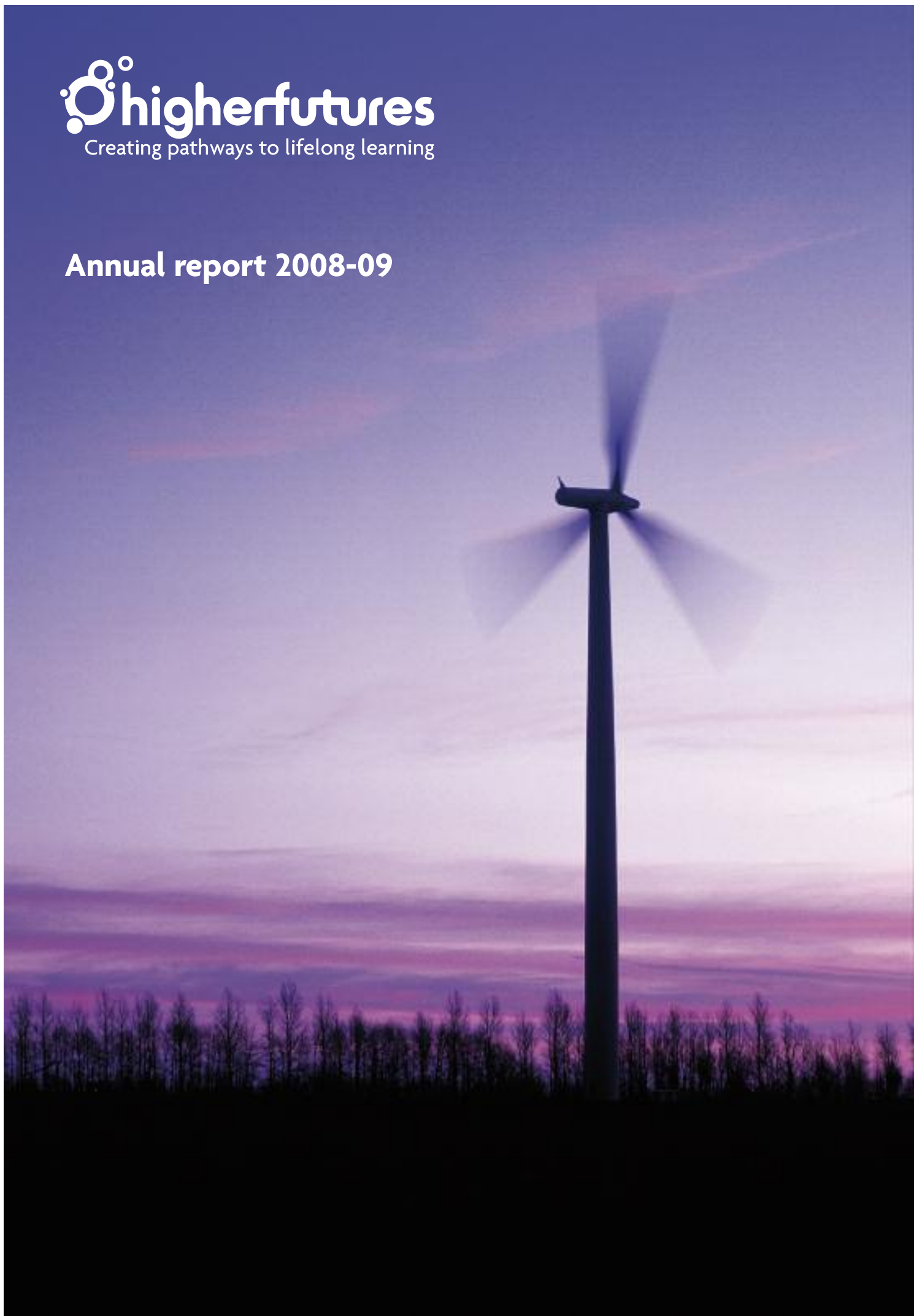




Annual report 2008-09



This year's highlights

- October 2008** Seminar with partners to focus on 'Sustainability'
- November 2008** Higher Futures presents its work on the 14 - 19 Diploma at the National LLN Conference
- December 2008** Higher Futures receives a visit from Government Minister for Higher Education, David Lammy
- January 2009** A major survey to gather partners' views on the work of Higher Futures is launched
- March 2009** Our Scoping study of opportunities in Creative and Media Industries sector is completed
- March 2009** Peer evaluation with Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire network concludes
- April 2009** Successful joint bid with Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield to the HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund
- May 2009** A local higher education marketing campaign is trialled in local press and radio
- June 2009** The Education Research Centre at the University of Brighton is selected to carry out external evaluation
- July 2009** Six Creative and Media Industry projects are launched

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Introduction

In 2008-09, we have seen a rapid expansion in network activity, made possible by the increased capacity and profile of Higher Futures. This year has been a time to reflect on our achievements, capture success stories and look to the future sustainability of our partnership and activities.

Funding had been due to end in July 2009, but re-phasing and re-profiling of the business plan to December 2009 has better enabled the embedding of sustainable activity, increased outputs in key areas and allowed several pilot projects to be launched in a new sector, Creative and Media Industries.

Rapid progress has been made by the sector teams, who have worked extremely hard to achieve a number of significant curriculum developments and progression agreements. The progress made around foundation degrees has been particularly significant, illustrating the commitment and enthusiasm of the teams to work together with employers to drive developments for the benefit of vocational learners.

It has been encouraging to see the continued effort of the information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition team who have worked across the network, delivering events and services to thousands of learners. The strength of the IAG network has not only enabled us to work with our partner institutions to secure funding from the Higher Education Council for England's (HEFCE) Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF), but it has also led many institutions to embed these posts into institutional structures.

The value that partners place on cross-network interaction was clearly evident from a major partner survey carried out earlier in the year. The external impact assessment commissioned towards the end of the year will build on this evaluative evidence to look at the cultural change stimulated by our work. After much discussion and analysis, the partners unanimously agreed a 'sustainability model' for the network that will be rolled out in 2009-10.

Professor Rhiannon Billingsley

Network Chair

Summary

This year has seen an increase in cross network interaction and collaboration between the partners, with staff development occurring widely within the network. The joint research and evaluation practitioner workshops resulted in a total of eleven small scale projects and further enhanced our relationship with Aimhigher.

Higher Futures has delivered impressive results in terms of the number of progression agreements that have been implemented, and the debate and discussion these have generated has proved invaluable in shifting cultural attitudes and raising awareness of widening participation in general. Employers have been involved in discussions across a number of sectors, including collaboration with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals to develop progression agreements (PAs) for nursing degree programmes.

Curriculum developments that have taken place this year include the launch of a number of foundation degrees (FDs) as well as the delivery of taster programmes, short courses and continuing professional development. Extension of work into the creative and media sector has led to the launch of six pilot projects into 2010.

This year, over 1,500 learners received one to one support and over 3,600 accessed services through group sessions from our dedicated information, advice and guidance (IAG) team. The strength of the IAG referral network has enabled Higher Futures to join with partners to submit a collaborative bid to the HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF), further extending and embedding activity in to 2010. In addition to this, the majority of posts within the IAG team are now embedded into institutional structures, illustrating the commitment and value that partners place on this area of work.

External networking and links to other IAG and related services has been extensive, and involvement with local authorities and government departments has increased considerably. Higher Futures is represented at various groups and meetings, enabling us to share our specialist knowledge of vocational progression routes and curriculum requirements.



Some of the wider network team together with the Directorate team.

Higher Futures has worked extensively with its partners to gather consistent management information on which to track the progress of level 3 learners to higher education (HE) programmes across the network. This is allowing us to analyse trends and also gives us a good picture of the courses which provide good progression routes to higher education.

Sustainability has been a core theme for Higher Futures throughout the year and a number of activities are enabling the network to extend and expand partnership working. A huge amount of work has been carried out to assess the impact of Higher Futures including the partner survey, the conclusion of the peer evaluation process and the commissioning of external evaluation, each contributing to developing our sustainability strategy and the production of a sustainability model, putting plans in place for embedding valuable activity.

Our communication and dissemination strategy has remained central to raising the profile of Higher Futures. We have organised and attended a large number of events and also benefited from a visit from Government Minister for Higher Education (HE), David Lammy, demonstrating his interest in the work of LLNs. We trialled a local HE marketing campaign which generated a number of positive enquiries and we continue to think of innovative ways to market our activities.

The business plan has been re-profiled to allow work to continue into the extension period from August 2009 - December 2009 and new funding from the HEFCE ECIF initiative is allowing network activity to continue into 2010.

Network development

Team Development

There has been a real increase in **cross-network interaction and collaboration** between the partners, and the wider network team continue to meet regularly to share information and exchange ideas. The value of this collaboration was clearly evident from a major partner survey conducted earlier in the year (see 'Partner survey', page 18). The success and achievements of Higher Futures owe a lot to the commitment and enthusiasm of many colleagues and their desire to engage with stakeholders, academic colleagues and sector specialists for the benefit of learners.

Providing a platform for practitioners to develop their skills and learn from others has been vital in sharing best practice and capturing information. After the success of the **research and evaluation workshops** held last year, Research Development Officers have successfully supported a number of practitioners to undertake small-scale research activity. This has led to a total of eleven projects, eight conducted by Higher Futures and three by Aimhigher, allowing important strands of work to be captured, evaluated and shared with others, including external stakeholders such as other LLNs and researchers. Two members of staff have also taken the opportunity to enrol on a masters module. The research project work has further enhanced our relationship with Aimhigher and provided valuable opportunities for further collaboration between staff in both networks.

Our second **network team away day** in October 2008 brought together the whole team and Operational Management Group members (OMG) to encourage cross-partnership working and provide a platform for planning and development throughout this third year. The day combined networking opportunities, team building activities, workshops and an **employer discussion panel** focussing attention on 'employer engagement' issues. Both sector and IAG teams have followed this through in their work this year (see 'Employer engagement', page 13)

Staff development and **continuing professional development** (CPD) has occurred widely within the network, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of team members. FE staff have benefited from regular updates about higher level careers opportunities and appropriate progression routes, including information on UCAS procedures, student finance, and reference writing for vocational learners. They also received updates from sector development staff on changes and developments within the employment sectors.



HE staff have attended events on the nature of vocational learners, level 3 vocational course content and assessment, 14 – 19 curriculum change and admissions policies. They have also hosted events for team members and colleagues from partner colleges, such as information sessions on changes in the higher level workforce.

The University of Sheffield (UoS) Careers Service hosted a CPD day for the Higher Futures IAG team and their IAG colleagues from partner colleges. They were able to see the service and resources in use for HE students, including observing one to one interventions. Practitioners were able to develop their ability to deliver the careers agenda for 'HE in FE' students, and gain a better insight into the support offered at higher education institutions.

A 'Practitioner Forum' for Early Years was established in response to curriculum specifications and the challenge of government targets for a graduate led Early Years profession. The forum met four times, bringing together academic staff from both further education and higher education, and sector specialists to provide an opportunity to share best practice and provide policy briefings.

The research project work has further enhanced our relationship with Aimhigher and provided valuable opportunities for further collaboration between staff in both networks



Our second network away day in October 2008



Sustainability

At the end of last year we recognised the need to start devising strategies to allow valuable partnership work to continue. A **Sustainability Working Group** was formed to devise a framework for assessing the viability and desirability of sustaining the network, culminating in a presentation to partners at a 'sustainability' seminar in October 2008. This was also an opportunity for partners to discuss the potential risks and any actions needed.

This quickly led to agreement on a major survey of the network partners to provide answers and feedback on a series of detailed questions. The outcomes of this resulted in the formation of a **model for sustaining the partnership**. This 'sustainability model' was agreed by the Strategic Management Board in June 2009 and is complemented by the embedding of practice, processes and systems within the overall exit strategy. The survey also contributed to our overall evaluation of the partnership (see 'Evaluation', page 18).

Elements of the sustainability model are:

- Strategic support for ongoing co-ordination and development of the network to be embedded into a substantive post within Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).
- Commitment to maintain senior level input from the other partners.
- Embedding IAG activity to support vocational learners and systems for monitoring progression.
- Self-sustaining professional networks of IAG and sector practitioners generated through HE-FE collaboration.
- Utilising network capacity to lever additional funding for partnership initiatives linked to current and emerging policy around high level skills.

Extending network activity

Earlier in the year Higher Futures collaborated with the university partners to prepare a successful bid to the HEFCE **Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF)**. The money is being used by our network partners to provide an information, advice and guidance service for individuals and employers facing, or at risk of, redundancy in the economic downturn.

The subsequent IAG work being carried out in partner organisations has further enhanced the **embedding of IAG activity** for mature and work based learners. ECIF activity is enhanced by cross-network activity and referral of clients between partners, something which the team has become accustomed to over the lifetime of Higher Futures.

The ECIF work has also accelerated the involvement of Higher Futures with Jobcentre Plus, who refer potential clients to the network and use our staff as external partners in visiting local employers, and are keen to have closer involvement with the network.



ECIF activity is enhanced by cross-network activity and referral of clients between partners, something which the team has become accustomed to over the lifetime of Higher Futures

Supporting progression

Progression agreements

Building on the first progression agreements (PA) established last year, a total of 83 PAs have now been agreed, with a further 3 in development. The **long term dialogue** that has arisen from this work has been invaluable in raising the issues around vocational progression and creating a deeper awareness of widening participation in general. Admissions tutors and academic staff across all sectors have been involved in the exchange of information and ideas, allowing us to build on the achievements of last year.

In the longer term, PAs may become redundant as vocational and work based learners are admitted on the same terms as other applicants, which will mark the real success of these discussions.

After the success of the first PA for progression into its foundation degree (FD) Health and Social Care, Sheffield College has now adopted an institutional policy to extend PA development to all its **FD programmes**, starting with Creative and Media.

There has been an extension of PAs into **nursing degree programmes** at Sheffield Hallam University which has led to collaboration with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals for an agreement offering progression for clinical assistants, the first such PA nationally with a hospital trust.

The Faculty of Development and Society (D&S) at SHU is carrying out a **review of its entire admissions policy** to assess its suitability for supporting vocational progression, illustrating the increased awareness of potential issues.

The first progression agreement within engineering at the University of Sheffield (UoS) is nearing completion and the debate and discussion it has generated around vocational learners and qualifications has been invaluable in shifting cultural values.

In addition to PA development activity, Higher Futures has worked extensively with its partners to gather consistent management information on which to benchmark and track the progression of level 3 learners to higher education programmes across its network (see 'Learner benchmarking and tracking', page 15).

Our work on supporting the **introduction of 14-19 diplomas** also contributed to this wider engagement, assisting partners in their consideration of admissions requirements and policies, and encouraging stakeholder awareness of the suitability of the Advanced Diploma for progression to HE.



The signing of the first workplace progression agreement.

14 - 19 Diploma engagement

Supporting local implementation

There has been a rapid increase in the engagement of Higher Futures with local and national developments in the 14 – 19 Diploma. At a local level, we have worked closely with Sheffield City Council, who identified Higher Futures as an effective way to gain a general FE/HE perspective on Diplomas, as well as **specialist knowledge of progression routes and curriculum requirements**.

Higher Futures has participated in preparing the successful Gateway bids and the consortium planning process for relevant 'Lines of Learning'. Higher Futures is also represented at meetings of the local authority Diploma Management Group and, where possible, the Diploma Delivery Partnerships.

Higher Futures decided not to promote progression agreements to support the introduction of the diplomas, as many LLNs have done. This policy was presented to the National LLN conference in November 2008.

As we expected, **widespread acceptance of the Diploma locally** has been indicated. Both universities have a number of courses which will accept any Diploma for entrance and most will accept at least one of the lines of learning. Both universities have indicated their willingness to update their position as further developments within the Diplomas take place.

National influence

At national level, the IAG and Transition Co-ordinator is a member of the UCAS/DCSF Curriculum Development Group, with a remit to consider the suitability of new and changing level 3 qualifications for entry to higher education. A significant focus of the group's work over the past few years has been the 14 – 19 Diploma; the knowledge and understanding of this has proved invaluable in working with the Higher Futures partnership and stakeholders.

Although the contribution of Higher Futures is clearly valued, engagement with the 14 – 19 Diplomas presents capacity and resource issues. As a result, participation by the network has, by necessity, been limited to the Lines of Learning relating to our sectors and limited to developments in Sheffield.

Work on the wider issues of fair admission to HE for vocational learners has also been undertaken with the SPA organisation (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) and with Universities UK (UUK).





A scoping study into gaps and opportunities in the Creative and Media Industries (CMI) sector was completed in March, allowing Higher Futures to launch several new pilot projects.

Curriculum development

Foundation degree developments in Early Years, Engineering, Health and Public Services have facilitated joint curriculum development and employer engagement between the universities and colleges, but also stimulated dialogue between the colleges on curriculum planning across the network.

The **Early Years** sector has seen the successful launch of two Foundation Degree (FD) pathways with Chesterfield College and Dearne Valley College and a 'fast track' route to Early Years Professional status piloted with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC).

Engineering programmes have benefited from a new FD Integrated Engineering developed by SHU and Rotherham College of Arts and Technology (RCAT), and a Maths summer school/bridging programme created at UoS.

A new FD Public Services has been developed by Sheffield College, supporting the **Public Wellbeing** sector.

The **Sustainable Communities** sector has developed a top-up route to Working with Communities FD at UoS; a new FD Landscape, Heritage and Conservation at UoS; Joint taster programme for FDs delivered by Northern College (NC) and SHU. A new taster course, 'HE, Community and Identity' was also ran at UoS.

A scoping study into gaps and opportunities in the **Creative and Media Industries (CMI)** sector was completed in March, allowing Higher Futures to launch several new pilot projects at Barnsley College, Chesterfield College, SHU and UoS. Projects include taster courses, e-learning, continuing professional development and placements. Work started on the projects over the summer and is continuing through the academic year 2009-10.

Employer engagement

There has been extensive collaboration with Local Authority Children's Services in Sheffield, Rotherham and North Derbyshire, and some private sector providers. This has been driven by the roll-out of new FD pathways but also reflects the requirement for workforce upskilling across the **Early Years** sector.

Strong contacts have been maintained with CACHE and CWDC, who also approved a fast-track route from FD to Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

In the **Engineering** sector, a 'Maths for Engineering' project has enabled UoS to analyse the articulation between Level 3 vocational courses and its Level 4 requirements, leading to several mini projects with the colleges to carry out appropriate curriculum adaptation and development work.

Ongoing engagement with several **local employers**, such as Sheffield Forgemasters and CORUS, and sector organisations like the National Metals Technology Centre (NAMTEC), has led to the development and promotion of new FD provision, and through invitations to speak at sector events and seminars.

Towards the end of the year, a successful bid was also presented to the Train to Gain Enhancement Fund to subsidise the launch of the new FD in Integrated Engineering. Good contact has been sustained with SEMTA, while dialogue has extended to The Engineering Council UK (ECUK) and Institute of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) to establish routes to professional engineer status and accreditation of workplace learning linked to those FD developments.

The collaboration with Sheffield Teaching Hospitals around workforce progression in the **Health and Social Care** sector has consolidated partnership between the organisation, Sheffield Hallam University and Sheffield College, resulting in the signing of the first Progression Agreement of its type into nursing degrees (see 'Progression Agreements', page 10). This success has also sparked similar discussions with Sheffield Primary Care Trust.

Our contact with Sector Skills Councils, Skills for Health and Skills for Care, continue through the former CoVE (Centre of Vocational Excellence) network and meetings continue to provide regular opportunities for dialogue and briefing discussions on vocational issues.

Contact with professional and community based sports clubs and associations in the **Public Wellbeing sector** is expanding. Market research activity has begun with professional and community sports clubs to assess demand for management related skills at local level.

Taster courses in **Sustainable Communities** have brought university and college partners together to share different methods and explore potential to expand market interest from both learners and employers. Engagement exists with a diverse range of employers and community organisations, generated through our three FD programmes and the success of bridging activity last year. This encouraged three partners, UoS, SHU and Northern College to embark on a joint venture to extend 'employer' contacts and attract wider market interest.

Extension of work into the **Creative and Media sector** has involved engagement with 13 employers, sector bodies and development agencies as part of an extensive scoping study. The study canvassed the views of employers and other Creative and Media Industry (CMI) stakeholders within the region about their perception of skills gaps in the industry and the HE/FE developments which would be the most useful. The findings of the study shaped funding for six pilot projects that were approved towards the end of the 2008-09.





IAG and transition support

Information, advice and guidance (IAG), and transition support has remained a highly successful strand of work, with IAG and Transition Officers throughout the network delivering a co-ordinated service to learners. The team have delivered impressive outputs and have arranged a number of events to support their work. This year, **3,644 learners accessed services** through group sessions delivered by IAG and Transition Officers, and **1,594 learners received one to one support**.

More than 4,400 vocational learners have benefited from other IAG activity such as events relating to higher education progression, visits to HEIs and talks. This includes sector specific events arranged within the colleges, events for learners and their parents, attendance at regional sector events, Open Days and UCAS conventions. Very few of the targeted learners would have attended such events without the intervention of the IAG team across the network.

External networking and links to other IAG and related services has been extensive. Sheffield Futures (the Connexions service) has run a series of CPD events for their own advisers and for careers teachers in the city, where Higher Futures staff have made presentations and run question and answer sessions on vocational learner progression, curriculum changes and the 14 – 19 Diploma (see '14-19 Diploma engagement', page 11).

There has been increasing involvement with Sheffield Local Authority, where Higher Futures is represented on the 14 – 19, IAG and Learning for Life groups under the Children and Young Peoples' Directorate and used as a source of information about higher education, as well as contributing to wider educational discussion.

Higher Futures helped Damian Brookes to realise his potential and gain a place at university studying BA (Hons) Automotive Design Technology. "Higher Futures opened windows which I thought weren't even there. I had no intentions of going to University and coming from a BTEC, I didn't think that I had the correct qualifications anyway."

Damian Brookes

The network also acts as a direct link between the local authority and HE when contact with specific HE staff is requested. Higher Futures continues to participate in meetings with IAG agencies including Sheffield Futures, NextStep, South Yorkshire Strategic IAG Board and the Aimhigher IAG sub-group.

Useful links have also been made with government departments, Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and Higher Futures has been invited to participate in several consultation meetings on relevant IAG issues.

The strength of the IAG team has enabled the formation of a collaborative referral network as part of the HEFCE Economic Challenge Investment Fund (ECIF) initiative (see 'Extending network activity', page 9). In addition to this, the majority of posts within the IAG team are now embedded into institutional structures, illustrating the commitment and value that partners place on this area of work.



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Learner benchmarking and tracking

Significant effort has been co-ordinated between the college partners and universities to build a picture of the 'progression profile' of vocational learners from FE to HE programmes since the inception of Higher Futures. Through this work we now have a database of all learners who completed their Level 3 course from 2005-06 to 2008-09, and subsequently progressed to HE programmes within the network.

This data can be interrogated by institution, sector, course of origin and destination, in addition to the 'Equality and Diversity' profile. Overall, vocational progression in target sectors has increased from 22% of successful completers in 2006-07 to 30% in 2008-09.

Data relating to the profile of learners progressing to HE who completed their courses in the three years from 2005-06 to 2007-08 reveals an upward trend in the proportions of disabled and minority ethnic students, while the balance of mature and women learners has remained fairly static.

The Higher Futures allocation of Additional Student Numbers (ASNs) was mainstreamed in 2008-09 in different sector areas across four of our partners; the Public Wellbeing sector at Dearne Valley College (DVC); the Engineering sector at RCAT; the Health and Social Care, Public Wellbeing and Engineering sectors at SHU; and the Sustainable Communities sector at UoS.

The percentage of vocational learners in HF sectors progressing within the network has increased from 22% of successful completers in 2006-07 to

30%

in 2008-09

Spreading the word

Communication and dissemination has remained central to raising the profile of Higher Futures and engaging with partners, learners and employers. This year we have trialled a local HE marketing campaign and attended and exhibited at a number of events. In December 2008, Higher Futures and Aimhigher welcomed Government Minister, David Lammy during his visit to the two universities in Sheffield, demonstrating his commitment to widening participation in higher education and raising the profile of the network.

Directorate communications

The Higher Futures website has been populated with detailed information for learners, employers and partners and a secure section has been created for partner use only, housing all important documentation. A database of progression pathways for learners has also been developed, allowing learners to see how they can progress from level 3 courses to level 4.

Events

Higher Futures has supported its regional profile strategy through regular attendance and representation at a wide range of skills related conferences and events in the Sheffield City region (SCR).

Events have perhaps been the most successful mechanism for raising the profile and awareness of the network, and the benefits of working with Higher Futures. We have held **information stands** at twelve events, including university open days, skills and training events and sector specific events. These have helped to generate enquiries and allowed us to build relevant contacts. Here are some of the events that we exhibited at in 2008-09:

- Skills Yorkshire and Humber
- NAMTEC Conference
- Engineering Employers Event
- Adult Learner Event
- Progression opportunities fair (in conjunction with Aimhigher)
- Re: skilling the City conference
- Hallam FM jobs day
- Star Jobs Fair
- Routes into Local Learning Roadshow
- University open days



An Early Years CoVE event



An information stand at a regional skills event.

The Directorate team have attended a large number of external events, both as participants or presenters such as National LLN conferences and partner graduation ceremonies.

The team has also attended and contributed to **training and dissemination events** hosted by external IAG providers and careers services.

Several careers events have been held jointly by Aimhigher and Higher Futures, building on the CPD events previously held by Aimhigher and focussing on HF priority sectors. Professional updating events for IAG and careers staff in the region have been well attended. Presentations by local and national employers as well as Labour Market Information and graduate prospects have proved useful to the IAG and sector teams as well as academic staff from partner organisations.

Local HE marketing campaign

With the agreement of the partners, it was decided to trial a local HE marketing campaign to support high level skills opportunities within the network. The campaign entitled 'Fame in Your Field' involved an extension of the Higher Futures website function, supported by radio advertising and bus posters. It ran for one month between April and May and generated a number of positive enquiries that were passed on to partners.



Government Minister for Higher Education, David Lammy visits Higher Futures and Aimhigher

Evaluation

This has been an important year for evaluating our work and reflecting on our achievements. A number of activities were commissioned in order to allow us to assess the impact of the network, and contribute to our sustainability strategy (see Sustainability, page 8).

Peer evaluation

Peer evaluation between Higher Futures and GM&WL LLN was completed following two reciprocal half-day discussion groups in March 2009. These sessions involved each directorate team and partner representatives from each network in discussions across a common set of topics, including communication and marketing, employer engagement, evaluation, IAG and learner tracking, partnership and progression and curriculum.

This had been preceded by the sharing and analysis of a wide range of documentation, from which each network was able to compile a series of questions to structure the discussion. The final report identified good practice, challenges and issues for sustainability, the latter being a horizontal theme throughout the evaluation.

Partner survey

It was recognised that the basis of our sustainability strategy had to be grounded in an analysis of the value that partners placed on the partnership. This led to a major survey of partners, designed, tested and conducted internally between January 2008 and March 2009.

With contributions from some **84 colleagues across the 12 institutions**, ranging from senior managers and the Higher Futures network team to tutors, student support staff and others, this survey yielded important data on the perceived impact, value-added benefits, areas of interest, further development opportunities and preferred models of continued partnership working for Higher Futures.

Partners cited a range of strategic and operational benefits of participation in Higher Futures, including widening participation, increasing retention and progression, improving the student experience and employer engagement. All partners responded positively to the concept of a continued HE-FE partnership model to sustain activity.

External evaluation

The external '**Impact assessment**' was commissioned in June 2009. This is being conducted by the Education Research Centre at the University of Brighton and will consider the extent of 'cultural change' within the three core constituencies of the network - learners, staff and partners - with a view to advising on future action to embed and sustain achievements.

All partners responded positively to the concept of a continued HE-FE partnership model to sustain activity

Finance and resource allocation

There was a modest under spend for the year of £6,535, against the profile of HEFCE funds received. The original budget and business plan was re-profiled in January, with approval from HEFCE, to allow for an extension for the period from August to December 2009. Network partners themselves also continue to contribute substantial resources to the maintenance and support of Higher Futures.

Year 3 project funding summary

Funding	Totals (£)
HEFCE grant	£1,194,351
Expenditure	£1,187,816
Carry forward	£6,535
Partner contribution	£221,281



Conclusions



It has certainly been a highly successful year, packed with collaboration between the partners, allowing the network team to share best practice and work together to drive curriculum developments.

Higher Futures has worked hard to build the capacity of the team to enable practitioners to take on challenges and deliver results. Both the sector teams and the IAG and Transition team have achieved impressive outputs, and the debate and discussion they have generated is having a long lasting impact on institutional policies around vocational progression. They have created a momentum that is self-sustaining, with many roles now embedded into institutional structures.

The ECIF project will be ongoing in 2010 and will provide impartial one to one support to those affected by the economic downturn, allowing practitioners to remain connected and refer individuals across the network.

After an extensive evaluation of the impact of the partnership and the value that partners place on different strands of activity, our sustainability strategy is in full swing. We will now be looking to utilise network capacity to lever additional partnership initiatives linked to current and emerging policy around high level skills.

Glossary

ASNs	Additional Student Numbers
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
CACHE	Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education
CMI	Creative and Media Industries
CoVE	Centre of Vocational Excellence
CPD	Continuing professional development
CWDC	Children's Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DVC	Dearne Valley College
ECIF	Economic Challenge Investment Fund
EYPS	Early Years Professional Status
FD	Foundation Degree
FE	Further education
GM&WL	Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire (Lifelong Learning Network)
HE	Higher education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IAG	Information, advice and guidance
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
NC	Northern College
NAMTEC	National Metals Technology Centre
OMG	Operational Management Group
PA	Progression Agreement
RCAT	Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
SHU	Sheffield Hallam University
SMB	Strategic Management Board
SPA	Supporting Professionalism in Admissions
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UoS	University of Sheffield
UUK	Universities UK

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Back row: Sally and Jackie
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The Directorate team would like to say a huge thank you to Christina Metcalf and Rachel Longstaff for their hard work and contribution to Higher Futures. Both left during summer 2009, having been involved since the very beginning.





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