

This newsletter is available in alternative formats.

The Higher Futures brochure, giving more information about the project, its aims and objectives is now available. Please contact us, using the details below, for a copy of the brochure.



A warm welcome to Higher Futures!

Higher Futures is a new collaboration concentrating on vocational and work-based learning. The Network is gradually taking shape. Our Directorate has been in place since March 2007 and partners are busy appointing colleagues to various posts that will see a team of up to 30 staff by the end of the summer. Details inside.

This newsletter provides topical news and information for all our stakeholders - the partners, local employers, vocational and work-based learners, and a wide range of other agencies and organisations across South Yorkshire, North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire.

I am also pleased to announce our link with the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire LLN, and look forward to working with Gary Mallon and the team as we support each other in sharing ideas, practice and evaluation work.

**Rob Harrison
Director**

Meet the central management team

Rob Harrison, Director

Prior to his appointment as Director of Higher Futures, Rob was Skills and Workforce Development Manager at the University of Bradford. He had worked at Sheffield Hallam University as Lifelong Learning Manager, before leading two multi agency partnerships, based at the University of Huddersfield, as Project Director of ELLEN (Extended Lifelong Learning Environment Network) and Head of Operations for Trans HEurope.

Contact Rob on 0114 225 3089 or at r.p.harrison@shu.ac.uk

Jackie Powell, IAG and Transition Coordinator

Jackie joins the Higher Futures team from partner institution Chesterfield College, where she worked as Information, Advice and Guidance Manager. Originally a sixth form teacher, Jackie moved into further education with The Sheffield College, where her previous positions included Senior Lecturer, Academic Programme Manager, and Student Services Manager, with overall responsibility for higher education advice and guidance across the college.

Contact Jackie on 0114 225 3627 or at j.powell@shu.ac.uk

Rachel Longstaff, Information and Communications Officer

Rachel brings a strong marketing and communications background to the project. A trained journalist, Rachel joined Higher Futures from the marketing department at Sheffield Hallam University, where she spent four years in new media marketing. Prior to this, she had worked as Journalist and Press Officer for a Sheffield publishing company.

Contact Rachel on 0114 225 3626 or at r.longstaff@shu.ac.uk

Christina Metcalfe, Administration Officer

Christina joined Higher Futures from Ufi, where she worked as PA to the Chairman, John Weston, and as Communications Team Administrator. An English Language graduate, Christina brings to the project strong organisational skills from various PA and project based roles in both Sheffield and Manchester.

Contact Christina on 0114 225 3628 or at c.metcalfe@shu.ac.uk

Judy Smith, Access and Progression Coordinator

Judy worked as Access and Progression Coordinator for Higher Futures, from its conception until July 2007, when she left the project. Judy made a major contribution to the formation of the network, both during its development stages and previously through her co-ordination of 'Building Pathways' work. Good progress has been made this year and Judy leaves us with a sound basis on which to grow sector development activities and the progression agreement framework.

We would like to thank Judy for her significant work on the Higher Futures project and wish her the very best of luck for the future.

Secret identity unveiled



Launch venue, the Long Gallery

Higher Futures' new identity was unveiled during our launch event at Sheffield's Millennium Galleries and Winter Garden on 19 July 2007.

We revealed the new name for the network and gave attendees the first opportunity to view the Higher Futures visual identity, designed by local agency theWorkshop.

Work began on the new image in April, when the Directorate team analysed the core aims and values of the project. Formerly South Yorkshire Lifelong Learning Network, the name Higher Futures was chosen to reflect the wider regional reach of the initiative, to emphasise the progression to higher education and to highlight the aspirational aspect of our work.

Sheffield design agency theWorkshop were recruited for their knowledge and experience of education projects, particularly in the vocational sector. They had worked on the successful VocEd project with the four South Yorkshire councils and had conducted considerable research in the field, which formed the basis for their design concepts.

Katie Richards, Account Manager at theWorkshop, said, "It was clear from the number of logo options initially created by our design team that this was a brief they'd enjoyed getting their teeth into. The identity was created against a tight schedule, which was only made possible by the excellent relationship we enjoyed with the Higher Futures team."

Logos and brand guidelines will be distributed to partners through the summer.

Higher Futures is the Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) for South Yorkshire and its travel-to-study area, including North Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire.

We are one of 28 LLNs nationally, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England.

Our aim is to create a network to transform higher education progression pathways and opportunities for vocational and work-based learners.

Our principal partners are:

- Barnsley College
- Chesterfield College
- Dearne Valley College
- Doncaster College
- Longley Park Sixth Form College
- North Nottinghamshire College
- Northern College
- Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
- The Sheffield College
- Sheffield Hallam University (lead partner)
- Thomas Rotherham College
- The University of Sheffield

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Sector updates

Our work in five priority sectors is supported by strong links with the Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) led by several of our partner colleges. Sector Working Groups (SWGs) have also been formed, bringing together practitioners, employers and skills organisations to forge ideas and developments.



Early Years

Doncaster College is leading activity in the early years sector. SWG discussions are concentrating on the 'Every Child Matters' policy agenda and issues concerned with existing funding, adult learners, transition support and progression routes. We await the appointment of a Sector Development Officer to work with colleagues at Sheffield Hallam University, when work on progression agreement activity can really get underway.

Engineering

The Sector Working Group identified a number of issues for Higher Futures to address, including improved information, advice and guidance on progression pathways; the call for a new curriculum; and the need to raise the profile of engineering as a career.

Activity action plans are in development, with Rotherham College of Arts and Technology leading on this strand. Work in this sector is helped by our involvement with the South Yorkshire Engineering Strategy Group, where ideas to support 14-19 progression and industry projects are developed.

Sustainable Communities

Three key strands have been identified within this broad theme - built environment, neighbourhood renewal, and community development. Northern College is leading on sustainable communities activity, and has begun by mapping existing provision and learners in the sector.

Public Wellbeing

The existing South Yorkshire Sport Strategy Group is an effective forum for discussion of sector work in the sport area of this strand and links to the 14-19 strategy. The Group offers a good base for joint activity, where Higher Futures can identify gaps in provision and where higher skills and education investment can take place. Dearne Valley College is leading on this strand.



Health and Social Care

The Sheffield College is the lead institution in our health and social care sector. A range of ideas have emerged from the SWG, including improved access to IAG, working with employers on work-based learning and demystifying admissions criteria. A Special Interest Group is due to meet in the autumn, with a plan for the development of progression agreements to be managed by the newly recruited Sector Development Officers.



Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire LLN core team. L-R: Andrew Molyneux, Catherine McDermott, Gemma Heaton and Project Manager Gary Mallon.

Our friends in the North

We are pleased to announce our pairing with Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire (GM&WL) Lifelong Learning Network.

Networks were invited to pair up by the Lifelong Learning Networks National Forum, an initiative designed to promote sharing ideas and good practice, hosted by Higher York.

Higher Futures was approached by GM&WL because of its comparative size, geographical area and strand crossover.

Garry Mallon, GM&WL Project Manager, said, "I am delighted that we are working with South Yorkshire LLN as part of the Peer Support Framework.

"The Framework, introduced by HEFCE and coordinated by the National Practitioners' Forum, gives us a valuable opportunity to work with South Yorkshire on the basis of critical friend, and we can both learn and gain from the relationship."

He added, "Both core teams can benefit from learning from each other and advising on overcoming and facing challenges."

Director of Higher Futures, Rob Harrison, agreed, saying, "Effective collaboration is integral to the success of the Higher Futures project. We already boast strong informal links with a number of other networks and organisations but, as GM&WL are six months ahead of us, their support and experience will prove invaluable throughout the project."

www.merseyandwestlancslln.ac.uk



Appointments

Higher Futures is delighted to welcome 20 further colleagues to the wider team. Most appointments have been made in information, advice and guidance, and sector development, with a few remaining posts to be filled over the summer. The new staff, spread across partner institutions, represent a significant leap forward for the network and the progress of the project, and we wish them the best of luck in their new roles.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition

Hayley Snowden (Chesterfield College), Laura Schofield (Dearne Valley College, IAG), Olive Freeman (Dearne Valley College, Transition), Michelle Agate (Doncaster College), Phil Nelson (Longley Park Sixth Form College), Tracy Hewitson (Longley Park Sixth Form College), Derek Freeborn (Northern College), Sarah Adams (Rotherham College of Arts and Technology), Sheila Hudson (The Sheffield College), Cerise Walters (Thomas Rotherham College), and Sue Fellowes (Sheffield Hallam University).

Activities update

Progression Agreement Framework

An agreement on core principles and a common structure for the Vocational Learner Progression Framework was presented to the Operational Management Group in June 2007 and ratified by the Board in July.

It lays out the processes by which the Sector Working Groups can develop sector-specific progression agreements, using a variety of different models, and discuss openly issues of guarantees and how progression agreements will benefit both learners and partners. Development is being supported by a guidance booklet for practitioners.

Employer engagement

Higher Futures has already begun to build links with the Sector Skills Councils and Unionlearn representatives. The Sector Development Officers are conducting an audit of existing relationships with key employers and employer representatives in each of our five sectors.

Our priority is to increase awareness of the Higher Futures project and of how employers can engage with and benefit from the initiative.

Progression mapping and learner tracking

Mapping work on level 3 courses and other work-based learning routes offered with the partnership has started, revealing over 3,000 students in just two sectors alone. This valuable data will allow Higher Futures to pinpoint where progression opportunities and agreements need to be created, and helps identify its 'community of learners'.

The IAG team will use the data to target information and guidance activities, and track those learners into and through higher education in college or university.

Annual report

The Higher Futures annual report 2006-07, submitted to HEFCE, will be available on the Higher Futures website from September 2007.

www.higherfutures.org

Higher Futures' IAG strategy is to complement existing services within and outside the network. Preliminary meetings have been held with local organisations and initiatives, such as Aimhigher, Learndirect, Sheffield Futures and Learning for Life, and recruitment to the IAG posts is almost complete.

Sector development

- Early years - Mary Haynes (Sheffield Hallam University);
- Engineering - Tony Oakley (Rotherham College of Arts and Technology), Dr Mark Thompson (Sheffield Hallam University);
- Health and Social Care - David Dale (The Sheffield College), Sheila Hudson (The Sheffield College), Graham Jones (The University of Sheffield), Dr Jenny Owen (The University of Sheffield);
- Public Wellbeing - Michaela Deakin (Dearne Valley College);
- Sustainable Communities - John Chapman (Northern College), Dr Anita Franklin (The University of Sheffield).