

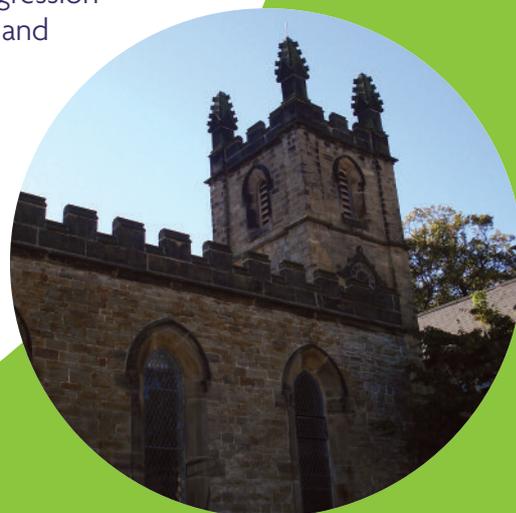
Away we go!

The 2007/08 year got off to a flying start with the first Higher Futures team away day, held at Northern College on 5 October.

For the first time in one place, more than 30 network colleagues came together to share thoughts, ideas and experiences so far and look ahead to the 2007/08 delivery plan. The day produced both personal and group priorities for taking forward progression agreements, raising employer and learner demand, developing guidance and referral services, website development, communicating with employers, learners and partners, and staff capacity building within the network. These are highlighted in more detail inside.

Feedback from colleagues shows how much they valued the chance to meet, chat, learn and laugh with each other. We were lucky to choose a beautiful day in a beautiful location, but its success came from the active participation of everyone involved. The biggest challenge now is to make the next one just as entertaining!

Rob Harrison
Director



Dr Jeremy Agnew, Access and Progression Coordinator

Directorate team at full strength

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Dr Jeremy Agnew as our new Access and Progression Coordinator.

Jeremy joins us from partner institution The Sheffield College, where he was a tutor in humanities and social science. His previous roles have involved him in curriculum development, validation and accreditation

work linked to progression to higher education, particularly in access to higher education and combined studies degree programmes.

Jeremy has considerable teaching experience in both further and higher education, and has undertaken significant partnership work with the two universities in Sheffield.

Director of Higher Futures, Rob Harrison, said, "We are delighted to welcome Jeremy to the Higher Futures Directorate team.

"His wide-ranging experience will prove invaluable in leading sector developments and taking forward the access and progression strand of our work. The team are very pleased to have him on board."

Jeremy took up his post on 1 November 2007 and can be contacted on 0114 225 3629 or at j.agnew@shu.ac.uk

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 29 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



Aimhigher extended



The Aimhigher South Yorkshire team

The future's bright for our Aimhigher colleagues after plans to extend funding for the project were announced.

Bill Rammell, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, confirmed in October that funding had been secured until 2011, three years beyond its original lifespan.

Director of Aimhigher South Yorkshire, Jed O'Neill, said, "We are pleased that the Minister has

signalled a continuation of Aimhigher and recognised the achievements of all those involved in the programme over the last few years.

"It's satisfying to know that the importance of continuity in widening participation activity has been emphasised."

Higher Futures is co-located with the Aimhigher South Yorkshire team and will be collaborating with them on a number of activities over the coming year. These activities include the academic conference for both HE and FE staff and the "Go Higher Stay Local" HE in FE Fair on 17 April 2008, which will showcase Foundation Degree provision at both FE and HE institutions to vocational learners across the sub-region.

In addition, Higher Futures and Aimhigher will be working together on a number of publications for vocational and work-based learners, detailing progression opportunities in the various employment sectors.

Aimhigher is a national programme run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), with support from the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). It aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the awareness, aspirations and attainment of people from under-represented groups.

www.aimhigheryandh.co.uk

www.apprentice-forward.org.uk

"Excellent opportunity for joint planning activity."

"Great opportunity to meet colleagues."

"An excellent setting."



A grand day out...

Wentworth Castle and Gardens at partner institution Northern College provided the spectacular setting for the first Higher Futures network team away day.

Combining workshops, presentations and planning sessions, the event allowed members of the wider team, from information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition, sector development, access and progression and partner management level, to join forces for the very first time.

Bringing together 39 staff across 12 institutions, the day gave the perfect opportunity for team members to find out more about the aims and objectives of the project, meet other members of the network and contribute to a meaningful and achievable delivery plan.

The delivery plan provides the basis for Higher Futures' activities and achievements throughout the 2007/08 financial year, so it was vital to use the wider team's knowledge and experience to feed in to this process.

The team's contributions were also invaluable throughout the sessions and workshops. In particular, the feedback and suggestions received during a communications session have created a solid platform on which to begin a major expansion of the website.

Adding context and perspective to the task ahead was Alison Wilson, Learning and Skills Manager at Yorkshire Forward. Alison's presentation on Key Skills Intelligence and Future Challenges provided an overview of the current regional skills landscape, with a look ahead to the obstacles we may face through the life of the project.

The Higher Futures Directorate team wishes to thank everyone who participated in this positive and productive event. We look forward to a prosperous 2007/08 and further successful team activities.

The Annual Delivery Plan 2007/08

The Higher Futures 2007/08 Annual Delivery Plan has been approved by both the Operational Management Group and Strategic Management Board.

The plan was developed by the Directorate team as the basis for planning and implementing key tasks in Years 2 and 3, and sets out a broad programme of work relating to the four main aims of the business plan.

The four key aims are:

- The creation of an inclusive and sustainable partnership to enhance the supply of higher education provision and transform institutional cultures, processes and procedures
- Improving progression opportunities through vocational routes
- Increasing demand from employers and vocational learners for higher level skills and education
- Improving access to information, advice and guidance and transition support.

The delivery plan is intended to show the ambition for the network over the year and enable individual colleagues to identify where their roles relate to particular developments and activities.

The delivery plan framework was presented to network staff at the away day in October, with the aim of engaging colleagues at the earliest opportunity in formulating key objectives for Year 2, and in gaining an understanding and ownership of the plan.

The Directorate team is working closely with network colleagues to roll out priority activities focusing on progression agreements, curriculum development and IAG and transition support.

Ideas and actions arising from the away day:

- Joint sector and IAG team session to explore roles and encourage cross-team collaboration
 - Sector-based learner focus groups
- Data capture seminar, building on the work of the Management Information Systems (MIS) group
- Team briefing sessions on developments concerning high level skills in each sector
- Publish periodic summary of activities distilled from partner progress reports
 - Website expansion project



Spotlight on...

Sector development at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology

Tony Oakley,
Sector Development Officer - Engineering



Tony Oakley has been involved with the Higher Futures project from the very beginning and is now leading the way in sector development, combining his Higher Futures role with that of CoVE Manager for Manufacturing.

Tony's Higher Futures role is demanding and varied. It can range from identifying cohorts of learners, to curriculum development; from contributing to reports, to employer engagement.

"I meet with employers to collect information relating to their skills and training needs, and advise on curriculum matters, including the development of Foundation Degrees. The development of progression agreements between FE and HE is also part of my remit."

Tony acts as the lynchpin for development of the engineering sector on behalf of our FE partners, working closely with the two universities. This involves creating and maintaining relationships with a large number of individuals, groups and organisations. These include sector trade bodies, Sector Skills Councils (particularly SEMTA) and qualification awarding bodies, as well as IAG teams and college and university delivery staff.

On working as part of the Higher Futures network, Tony said, "The benefits are the opportunities to help in making a difference for learners to access progression routes in to HE and the opportunities to meet with staff from other institutions to develop strategies for HE learning."

Tony sees brokering training for employers as one of the most challenging aspects of his job, but believes that ratifying progression agreements and maintaining the interest and support of employers and stakeholder organisations will also prove taxing.

However, Tony still has high ambitions for the future, "Before the end of the project, I would like to be part of the change in bringing about institutional thinking and development of routes in to higher education. I would also like to achieve a full set of progression agreements."

You can contact Tony at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology on 01709 722 824 or at toakley@rotherham.ac.uk



Staffing update

Since the first Higher Futures newsletter in summer 2007, we have made further appointments to strengthen the already impressive wider network team. We are delighted to welcome three additional colleagues to the information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition team, and five more to the sector development team, spread across our partner institutions.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition

We now have a full complement of IAG and transition staff and are pleased to add Sharon Moisiey at Barnsley College, Chris Hodgkinson at North Nottinghamshire College and Mike Bruce at the University of Sheffield to the team.

Sector development

Kathryn Dixon, at Doncaster College, is a welcome addition to the early years sector team and Matt Haines, at Dearne Valley College, heads up the public wellbeing sector. The sustainable communities sector team welcomes three new members in Anna Hawkins, at Sheffield Hallam University, Freda Chapple and Adam White, both at the University of Sheffield.

Other roles

From Sheffield Hallam University, Sylvia Ashton and Dave Cotton join the Operational Management Group. Alison Boydell joins the wider team in an access and progression support role.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) and transition update

The IAG and transition team is now established across the network, with an officer working in each of our partner institutions.

The team meets regularly, with each meeting having a sector or activity focus. Recent meetings have included presentations on setting up 'Impact' style mentoring schemes and on IAG issues for the health and social care sector.

Work with learners is progressing rapidly, with over 1,000 having received information about Higher Futures or direct individual support with progression. Visits and information sessions have also been arranged for groups of learners. Other work has included meetings with departmental staff and student advisers in partner organisations, and introductory work with employers.

Spotlight on...



IAG at Chesterfield College

Hayley Snowden began her role as IAG and Transition Officer at Chesterfield College in April 2007 and has made phenomenal progress during her first six months in post.

Working across the college directorates and alongside the existing information, advice and guidance team, her role involves identifying vocational learners at level three and providing them with ongoing individual support.

On her achievements to date, Hayley said, "I have been proud that I have been able to establish the Higher Futures brand and that people are accessing the support I can offer to them."

Seeing an average of 8-10 students per week on a one to one basis, the support Hayley offers can range from help with applications to organising pre-entry activities, such as shadowing higher education students for a day.

Hayley also plays a large role in raising awareness of the Higher Futures project within Chesterfield College and enjoys working as part of the wider network team.

She said, "The main benefit of working as part of the Higher Futures network is the team spirit, which offers a network of support and information. We are all working towards a common and important goal of encouraging vocational and work-based learners into higher education."

However, Hayley hasn't just focused on learners and has been proactive in engaging employers and adults in employment. She cites this as her biggest challenge over the coming months.

Despite the challenging workload, Hayley shows no signs of slowing down and has a positive vision for the future of the project.

"I would like the role of the IAG and Transition Officer to be embedded within college practices and to see an increase in the numbers of vocational learners within college and the local community applying and entering in to higher education."

You can contact Hayley at Chesterfield College on 01246 500 774 or at snowdenh@chesterfield.ac.uk

"The Higher Futures contact has helped me from the start and continues to be a point of contact for me. She has been a massive support and has helped me every step of the way."



Progress report: a learner's journey

Talissa Willers, 18, Chesterfield

Talissa wanted to pursue her ambition to work as a gym manager.

When Talissa met Higher Futures contact Hayley Snowden at Chesterfield College in June 2007, she said she wanted to gain higher level skills and qualifications to enable her to realise her goal.

Initially unsure of the progression routes open to her, Hayley actively worked with Talissa to help her understand her options, including drawing up an individualised plan, explaining the financial support available and organising meetings with programme and guidance managers.

Talissa decided that the Health-related Exercise and Fitness Foundation Degree would be the best option for her because of the integration of academic and work-based learning and the flexibility to study locally, whilst gaining the confidence, skills and knowledge relevant for employment. Hayley then supported Talissa through the clearing process.

Talissa is now studying full time on the Foundation Degree in Health-related Exercise and Fitness at Chesterfield College.

News in brief

HEFCE updates

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) produces regular updates on key developments and policy issues affecting Lifelong Learning Networks. To view these updates and other information on LLNs, visit the HEFCE website.

www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/lln

News digest

You can now sign up online to receive the Higher Futures news digest. The news digest is a round up of news, events and publications relevant to the work of the lifelong learning network, priority sectors and the region, direct to your inbox every fortnight. To subscribe to the news digest, or to view the news digest archive, visit the Higher Futures website.

www.higherfutures.org

Regional activity

A grouping of the four LLN directors in Yorkshire and the Humber has now met several times and begun to map out areas for joint working, especially communication with regional skills agencies and bodies. Round table meetings are taking place with Foundation Degree Forward, the Learning and Skills Council and Yorkshire Forward to discuss regional skills policy, strategy and funding developments. Two groups have also been set up among the networks themselves to share thinking on IAG and progression agreement activity. The groups will provide a vehicle for sharing practice, looking at the possibilities for joint action and how to tackle cross-boundary issues.

Peer evaluation



Steady progress is being made towards deciding the focus of peer evaluation activity with our friends from the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire LLN,

helped by a useful framework document published by the LLN National Forum. Our third get together, at the end of November 2007, was dedicated to shaping and planning an exercise that will take us into the first half of 2008.



Annual report

Higher Futures' first annual report was published in September 2007 and is now available online. The report details an exciting and productive development year from 1 August 2006 to 31 July 2007, in which we set up a strong infrastructure, completed vital preparatory work and made significant progress in key areas. Large print and other formats are available on request.

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is available in
alternative formats.

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Creating pathways to lifelong learning