



Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network

WVLLN

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# Newsletter

## Editor's comment

**W**e are delighted to tell you that Lifepilot has now been launched and hope that you will log on and look at all that the site has to offer. We have reviewed our WVLLN website and as a result have added a new section entitled 'Staff Room' which is aimed at HE and FE professionals and this will be launched at the beginning of February. There you will find video interviews with HE admissions and FE tutors as well as resources which have been developed through our development fund projects.

The WVLLN APEL Protocol was formally signed at the January Management Board and the APEL Learners' Guide has now been uploaded onto Lifepilot.

In this edition you will find an interview with Janet Lonsdale on Lifepilot, details of an Apprenticeship scheme in Merseyside and an article detailing our Apprenticeship agreements.

## Launch of Lifepilot — article by Ruth Waring, Progression Co-ordinator based at the University of Bath

**2**009 sees the launch of the WVLLN's new website Lifepilot [www.lifepilot.co.uk](http://www.lifepilot.co.uk). Lifepilot is designed with the working adult in mind who may be looking to progress in his/her chosen career, or looking to move into a completely new field. It provides a range of information designed to provide a starting point for adults who have the potential to study a higher level course, by dint of their experience. Lifepilot is not intended as a full guidance tool, its core strategy is to raise confidence and make adults believe they can be successful HE learners.

Some of the website's key features include: video clips of students sharing their experiences of HE and how they overcame some of the perceived barriers to studying; materials to build skills for study and update knowledge and a personal development planner.

I thought it would be interesting to learn more about how Lifepilot was developed and went to have a chat with Janet Lonsdale who has co-ordinated the project.

*Janet, can you tell me how you went about developing the con-*

*tent of Lifepilot?*

We recognised that we needed to talk to the target audience right at the beginning of the development process. There are a lot of sources of support out there for those in full time education, but very few for those who are currently working full time. We found that it was important not to make assumptions about what was needed, and therefore, organised a series of focus groups with current learners on a range of courses from foundation degrees and access courses to unionlearn programmes. Students were asked what kind of information they would have found useful at the point they were considering returning to education.

*What were the messages that these current learners gave?*

The strongest message was that they would have found it really useful to hear from 'real' people who had already made the transition to HE. Information they thought would be most useful included how these learners had overcome perceived barriers such as juggling family, work and study commitments, and how they had tack-

led the seemingly complicated and daunting application process. Another area which was commonly referred to was the financial implications of returning to study.

*Did you undertake some sort of testing process once the website was developed?*

Yes, we felt this was a really important part of the development process. We were very pleased to get the support of unionlearn in arranging some testing days. They advertised the opportunity for their members to get involved, and those who came along included staff from the post office and the fire service, some of whom were currently studying on pre-HE courses. These testers gave us some really positive feedback about the content and layout of the website, particularly the learner videos and the information on APEL. They also fed back that they would like to see much more detailed financial information included and reminded us how important it was to avoid educational jargon as much as possible.

For the full interview please go to the WVLLN website.

## WVLLN Advanced Apprenticeship progression agreements—article by Victoria Trachy, Progression Co-ordinator at Bath Spa University

The Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) is in the process of developing leaflets to promote its Advanced Apprenticeship progression agreements to learners. The WVLLN's Advanced Apprenticeship progression agreements have been established to develop progression opportunities to higher education for work-based learners on Advanced Apprenticeship programmes. These agreements focus on the priority sectors of Children's Care, Learning & Development, Engineering, Health & Social Care, IT and Youth Work and progression to relevant Level 4 programmes especially Foundation degrees. The leaflets will also include case studies of students who have successfully completed an Advanced Appren-

ticeship and progressed to Foundation degree programmes within the WVLLN region. We are also extending our Advanced Apprenticeship Progression Agreements to include the subjects of Customer Service, Financial Services and Business Administration as progression to a range of relevant Level 4 Higher Education programmes.

Ever since Lord Leitch called for a doubling of apprentices in training in the UK by 2020, Apprenticeships have been at the forefront of the UK's skills agenda. Only recently the Government White Paper: New Opportunities pledged an extra 35,000 Apprenticeship places across the public and private sector over the coming year to help individuals

and businesses with the economic downturn. The Government also recognise the importance of developing progression routes for Advanced Apprenticeship students to access Higher Education and have been working with UCAS to implement their commitment to incorporate Apprenticeship frameworks into the UCAS points system by 2010: a further indication that apprenticeships are rapidly becoming a mainstream option for young people.

From a news release by the LSC in December the news came that 'at least 10,000 apprenticeships will be created in spite of the contraction in the economy,

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## Our aims for the next month

Elaine Fisher



**W**e are pleased to announce the formal signing of our APEL Protocol by the Management Board on 15th January. Work on

Subject Specific APEL appendices to the Protocol are now underway starting with Creative Industries. Through the work of Tasmin Head, based at Bath Spa University, we will, in conjunction with Arts Matrix, be running an APEL workshop for those in the Creative Industry who are interested in using their prior experiences as potential entry to HE.

Work is being undertaken to extend our Apprenticeship agreements to include those in Business Administration and Financial Services. We are also working on extending the NVQ agreement to include NVQ Level 3 Business.

The FE Development projects for Round 2 are well underway with the one from Norton Radstock College entitled 'Bridging the Gap' completing this week. One of the projects is also being supported by Aimhigher and will

result in the production of a DVD to support Access learners. This project aims to be completed by the end of May. The project is the result of a bid from the City of Bristol College.

We are currently awaiting bids from 4 colleges who have expressed an interest in producing resources/procedures/research which will support Apprentices progressing onto HE level programmes. It is expected that the projects will commence at the beginning of March.

We have also agreed funding to support Construction skills deliver two events aimed at the new Diploma in Construction.

In addition a further project proposal from U-too (in conjunction with an FE college) has been given preliminary approval for a project aimed at progression for teenage parents.

As you can see from the lead article of this edition Lifepilot has now been launched and we would encourage you to have a look and explore all that the site has to offer.

Following our very successful Diploma event in November 2008 the Strategic 14-19 Group have met to discuss how to take the workshop feedback forward. Draft documents, prepared from the feedback, have been prepared and will be sent to the WVLLN Management Board prior to being circulated to other interested stakeholders including HEFCE and HERDA.

Work continues through the Progression team and Mary Mussett to populate the website which now includes a 'Staff Room' section aimed at FE and HE professionals which has a series of videoed interviews and resources. We hope that you will have a look and find these useful.

### Upcoming Events

- 15th January—Management Board, Carpenter House, Bath
- 23rd January—Team meeting, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester
- 29th January—Line Managers' meeting, Carpenter House, Bath
- 17th February—Team meeting, University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham

## Apprenticeship agreements Continued from page 1

as the bill which launched the National Apprenticeship Service was announced ... by John Denham and Ed Balls'. The news release went on to explain that Sainsbury's, Tesco's, Superdrug and Phones4u have 'committed to expand massively their number of apprentices, to ensure they have the right skills to stay ahead of the competition'.

Skills Secretary John Denham said:

'This shows that we are well on the way to making apprenticeships a mainstream option for young people who want to get on. We anticipate that one in five of all young people will be undertaking an apprenticeship by the end of the next decade'.

Schools Secretary Ed Balls said:

'Employers recognise that they need well trained staff to compete and succeed in the market place. This significant increase of available Apprenticeships will help ensure they have the skilled staff they want. There is a great demand for Apprenticeship places from young people, which this will also go towards fulfilling'.

## New Apprenticeship Scheme on Merseyside—taken from the Guardian (28.01.09)

The Guardian reported that Knowsley Council on Merseyside had established an innovative new apprenticeship scheme with £1.5m from the government's new Work in Neighbourhoods Fund for deprived areas.

The initial idea, to provide 23 council jobs for young people through the apprenticeship route, was developed before the announcement of government proposals for 35,000 new apprenticeship places. The decision was taken to expand the scheme to the private sector. Businesses were asked to provide work placements for 100 unemployed 16-20 year olds on the basis that there would be no cost for them during the first year, a fifty-fifty arrangement in the second and only in the third year would companies fully fund the apprentice. Around 33 companies signed up within a week including Everton Football Club, Abbey Housing and GKB accountants.

The apprentices receive the minimum hourly wage for 18-22 year olds of £4.77 and attend college one day a week. For a local teenager like James Murray, 19, who had gained college catering qualifications on leaving school but with no work experience was finding it difficult to get a job in the sector, the scheme has provided a great way forward. "Now I'm in a busy hotel kitchen learning gourmet cooking," he says. "My chef trusts me with responsibilities and I'm doing my NVQ level 3 Certificate, which will be assessed here".

The council has plans to take on an additional 100 teenage apprentices this year and this scheme is providing a lifeline for Knowsley's young people in the current economic downturn. In conclusion Council leader Ron Round states that "this project is all about equipping the young people of Knowsley with the skills they need to achieve their full potential". He adds that he hopes other local authorities will follow this lead.