



Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network

WVLLN

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Issue 20

Newsletter

Editor's comment

We are pleased to tell you that the EKEN proposal was accepted by the Management Board in June and a launch event in October is now being planned.

August 31st sees the end of the fully funded period for the WVLLN. We are delighted that we will be able to continue for a further two years to embed all of our developments and continue to forge ahead with progression for vocational learners.

We are saying goodbye to several members of staff and would like to say a big 'thank you' to them for all their support, hard work and contributions to our developments. We wish them all good luck in their new roles. In particular we are saying goodbye to our Director, Steve Dear who will be leaving us at the end of August. I am pleased to report that I will be carrying on his excellent work as the new Manager of the WVLLN.

PROGRESS REPORT on the "Apprenticeships and progression to HE: investigating barriers, building aspirations" project



In early 2009, Gloucestershire College and the City of Bristol College—in collaboration with Aimhigher - submitted a bid to the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN), requesting funding to support the development of an innovative, action research project designed to enhance 'the understanding of issues surrounding progression for apprentices' and 'to strengthen practices in relation to encouraging and supporting progression to Higher Education'.

The bid outlined two distinct strands of activity: i) the collection, collation and analysis of qualitative data gathered from a combination of questionnaires and semi-

structured interviews with apprentices, past and present - and their employers - to develop a greater understanding of the issues surrounding progression and the reasons behind traditionally low rates of progression within most subject areas; ii) the development of new training opportunities for those who work with apprentices on a regular basis to ensure that they not only increase their own knowledge and understanding of HE opportunities, but that they also recognise the potential opportunities available to their students.

The WVLLN were pleased to receive such a strong proposal demonstrating a clear relevance to the LLN agenda. Elaine Fisher, currently Assistant Director (Progression) commented "We were delighted to receive this bid and feel that this project will be of great benefit for apprentices across the southwest region". Other members of

the LLN team agreed, the bid was approved and the project commenced in May 2009.

As agreed, research began immediately with questionnaires being distributed to current and former apprentices and their employers. Julia Ingram (Aimhigher), Wendy Monteith (WVLLN) and Frank Williamson (WVLLN) developed and/or modified resources for the training sessions for tutors and advisers - the first of these was delivered at Gloucestershire College on June 17th and generated an enthusiastic and participatory response. Another session is planned at City of Bristol College in the autumn.

Further reports on this exciting project will appear in subsequent newsletters.

Article by Wendy Monteith, Progression Co-ordinator at the University of Gloucestershire & Frank Williamson, Progression Co-ordinator at the University of Bristol

Workshop at City of Bristol College



Recently, WVLLN progression co-ordinators from

the University of Bath and UWE were invited to City of Bristol College to facilitate a workshop for Learner Services staff. The main focus of the workshop was the extent of the transferability of level three vocational qualifications as compared with A levels.

A significant number of degrees do not require specific A levels, for example, a student with A levels in History, English and Geography can progress onto an honours degree in Business or Psychology. Do the same range of opportunities exist for a student with a National Diploma in Health Studies, Business or Engineering?

Progression co-ordinators described the work of the WVLLN in mapping the subject and generic skills within a range of

national diplomas. The subsequent detailed discussions with HE admission tutors to establish which level 3 courses formed an appropriate preparation for particular degree courses were also outlined.

College staff were interested to hear that where admission tutors were not asking for specific A levels, in areas like Coach Education, Psychology and Social Policy, they confirmed that they would definitely consider applicants

Place address label here

Lifelong Learning Network
University of Bath
Carpenter House, Broad Quay
Bath BA1 1UB

Phone: +44 (0) 1225 388704
Fax: +44 (0) 1225 388729
E-mail: E.Fisher@bath.ac.uk

www.wvlln.ac.uk

Our aims for the next month

Elaine Fisher



At the Management Board in June the EKEN (Knowledge Exchange Network) proposal was accepted. Kate Thomas, progression co-ordinator based at UWE, is now hard at work co-ordinating the launch of

the network. This will take place in October and anyone interested in attending should contact Kate at Kate2.Thomas@uwe.ac.uk.

The Diploma Consortia Directory SW has now been completed and can be found on our website. Many thanks to Tasmin Head for all her hard work in pulling the Directory together. The audit is nearing completion and will be uploaded onto our website in the autumn. Many thanks to Caroline Adelman for all her hard work on pulling available 14-19 resources together.

At the last 14-19 Regional Strategic Group we were fortunate to have Pam Hayes, 14-19 Vocational Advisor for South Gloucestershire Council, who provided us with an update on the structure and delivery of the diplomas. Many thanks to Pam for the training and all the associated resources can be found on our website.

We are now coming to the end of our fully funded period. The sustainability phase will commence on 1st September and we are all looking forward to taking the work of the WVLLN forward to ensure that all developments are embedded and that we continue to support vocational learners progress to HE.

We are saying goodbye to Tasmin Head based at Bath Spa University & Lynn Denning based at UWE. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both Tasmin and Lynn for all their hard work and contributions to the WVLLN—too numerous to mention. We wish them both well in the future. Lynn in her new role has committed to continuing to support the 14-19 Strategic Group so fortunately we will not be losing her expertise. We are also saying goodbye to Wendy Monteith, based at the University of Gloucestershire. We wish her well in her new role and thank her for her support over the last three years.

We are saying goodbye to Janet Lonsdale, Support for Learners Project Co-ordinator. We wish Janet all

the very best in her new role with Aim-higher and would like to thank her for all her hard work in getting Lifepilot up and running.

Finally we will also be saying goodbye to Steve Dear, Director. Steve has been with the project since its inception and has contributed considerable expertise to the WVLLN. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve for all his support and wish him well in the future.

I would like to thank all the co-ordinators for their support and look forward to working with them over the next two years.

I would also like to thank members of our Management and Executive Boards for their support of the WVLLN.

Upcoming Events

- 4th August—Apprenticeship Project Steering Group meeting, COBC
- 24th August— Steering Group meeting for Training Providers and HE Conference, Cheltenham

Progression Focus

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from the full range of national diplomas. In some cases where specific A levels are required, then the range of national diplomas which provide the necessary depth of subject content are more limited.

In the WVLLN report, *Level 3 and Beyond*, the results of a questionnaire given to level 3 vocational learners showed that over 45% of learners saw their subject tutors as the main source of advice about progression onto HE. The workshop participants agreed that the best next step was to hold a similar workshop to get the perspectives of subject tutors on the issue of the transferability of vocational qualifications.

Article by Ruth Waring, Progression Co-ordinator based at the University of Bath.

Valuing Your Experience Guide

Valuing Your Experience Guide

The WVLLN has developed an advice and guidance leaflet for anyone thinking about going on to higher education who needs information on whether they have the right qualifications or skills gained through experience to progress to higher education. Understanding Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and the process of APL within higher education can sometimes be challenging. The WVLLN Valuing your experience leaflet is an easy step by step guide which aims to demystify the APL process and the higher education jargon which surrounds APL.

The leaflet includes insightful case studies of students who have successfully used and evidenced their practical experience to enter higher education; provides useful questions to ask University/College APL contacts/advisors, gives examples of how you can evidence your work and life experience and previous qualifications; includes a glossary of terms and institutional contacts within the WVLLN and also outlines the benefits of APL.

The leaflet is also intended as a useful guide for tutors and staff within further education and higher education who are new to Accreditation of Prior Learning and want to find out more.

The leaflet was trialled with Level 3 BTEC, Access to HE and NVQ students within the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network Region. Feedback from students was positive and for some the guide provided the first time they had come across the term Accreditation of Prior Learning and its meaning. The leaflet encouraged students to use APL with one student noting that the leaflet "was very good at getting the information across. I feel that I now have a good understanding of APL and how I could go about using it."

The Valuing Your Experience Guide can be accessed via the following web link www.wvlln.ac.uk

Article by Victoria Trachy, Progression Co-ordinator based at Bath Spa University

