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Skills and Learning Intelligence

Quarterly Bulletin

Vol. 9 June 2003

Everything from floristry to flyfishing, from fencing to French ... boasts the **learnDirect** website, a key element in the provision of information, advice and guidance services for adults (IAG) in England. With the Government now seeking views on the reform of IAG services, our lead article takes a critical look at how provision is shaping up and the main issues facing the sector.

IAG has long been seen as key to engaging adults in learning and improving their career prospects. The national review of IAG is designed to improve the integration and impact of these services, yet part of the problem is that there is very little information overall on the scale, nature and impact of IAG. So how do we know what needs changing?

Here in the region, the FRESA Strategic Objective Group on Inspiring Individuals has identified improving IAG services in the region as a top priority. It highlights a perceived lack of such services as a significant barrier for those living in the region and will be seeking over the coming months to develop an implementation plan that will lead to improvements.



To support this process SLIM's forthcoming Learning Theme will be exploring IAG in the region, identifying key issues and developing an agenda for change. The FRESA process presents a real opportunity for policy makers and practitioners in the region to engage in a debate about how exactly to improve the quality and impact of services in the region. We hope you'll take part and if you need more information about how to participate then contact us at SLIM.

Of course a key issue in the provision of IAG services will be funding. Our review section looks at a potentially important source of funding for IAG activity – Objective 2 of the European Social Fund. And, the good news is that there is money available which Government Office for the South West is looking for projects to take up.



Also new with this issue is a Labour Market Information insert. This is a new feature of the Bulletin and we hope you like it. We've produced it as an insert so that you can copy it, pin it up on your wall for ready reference or make paper aeroplanes with it. The format will change slightly with each issue, as we feature new statistical sources and we will also be taking a look at the healthy labour market indicators which form part of the FRESA. So, take a look and let us know what you think.

Finally, thanks go to those of you who voted in the recent online poll to determine the next batch of Learning Themes. Despite our initial scepticism, that readers would not exactly be queuing up to grab their chance at the democratic process, a good number of you did actually vote, and we detected absolutely no cheating. And what's more we've listened! Hence the subject of the next Learning Theme.

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Information, Advice and Guidance: the case for change?

One of the keys to reaching and successfully engaging those who have not been active participants in adult learning is information, advice and guidance (IAG). Yet at the same time, a range of recent policy documents has identified the lack of IAG services as a significant barrier to improving adult participation in learning. A national policy vacuum combined with inconsistency of provision across the country, means that an individual's access to services depends very much on where they live, with services for those in the workplace at best patchy.

Just like motherhood and apple pie, we know IAG is a good thing, so how come there's so little of it? In this article we take a look at the emerging policy context for IAG and how IAG services are shaping up. National level proposals for reform coupled with the FRESA process mean that the time is ripe to take a look at IAG and a future agenda for action for the region.

Policy context

The Kennedy Report (Kennedy, 1997) on widening participation, noted the importance of integrating guidance into the learning process. Government concern to raise skill levels and widen participation by increasing demand for post compulsory learning has also highlighted the importance of effective information, advice and guidance (IAG) in helping adults and those who employ them to make effective decisions about learning and work. This concept has therefore been built into the government agenda on developing a lifelong learning culture, to ensure social inclusion and continuing economic development. The Strategy Unit report, *In Demand: Adults Skills for the 21st Century*, (SU, 2002) is a clear example.

The Adult Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG) Programme began in 1999 following the recommendations of the *Learning to Succeed* White Paper (DfEE, 1999). The aim of the programme is to "make available, to all adults aged 20 or over, accessible information and advice services of consistent quality on opportunities in learning and work"¹. The White Paper also announced the establishment of Learning and Skills Councils who would have responsibility for funding IAG services in their areas.

More recently the Government has published, *Information, advice and guidance: Towards a National Policy Framework Discussion Document, DfES (2003)*, which invited comments on the proposed principles for a new national policy framework and main elements of a new integrated IAG service. The document also sought views on:

- ❑ How to achieve greater consistency in the range and quality of services for adults?
- ❑ Improving customer awareness of IAG services.
- ❑ Improving access to services.
- ❑ Ensuring high quality IAG.
- ❑ Measuring the impact and effectiveness of services.

Adult Guidance has been defined as comprising a range of processes designed to enable individuals to make informed choices and transitions relating to learning and work (Brown, 1999). Adult Guidance provides the client with a safe space to discuss their future ambitions, dreams and goals. An action plan for the future is then devised, with the assistance of the Guidance Counsellor, to suit each client's requirements. This process involves exploration of up to date information, assessment of strengths, abilities and most importantly interests. Adult Guidance is a dynamic, helping, empowering, process of choice.

Information, Advice and Guidance provision in England

Existing public IAG provision includes:

- ❑ The [learnirect national helpline and website](#)
- ❑ The network of local IAG partnerships, bringing together diverse providers of IAG in local areas, including Jobcentre Plus and Connexions
- ❑ Other web-based resources such as Worktrain

The most significant of these are the IAG Partnerships, which bring together local IAG providers and partnerships in all areas of England. There are 67 Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships (IAGP) currently operating across England, of which eight can be found within the South West. Learning & Skills Councils (LSCs) are responsible for securing delivery of local IAG services through contracts with lead bodies of local IAG partnerships.

All organisations in a Partnership deliver IAG either as their main function or as one service among many. Typical members include careers services, further education colleges, libraries, voluntary agencies and training providers. Although in membership of partnerships, the Jobcentres' very focused function means that they have generally remained separate from partnership training activities that focus upon a careers service agenda. Partnerships help their members supply IAG services by providing funding for delivery and resources, free training for staff and marketing materials.

Indeed, one feature of guidance policy within England is the number of stakeholders involved. These include the Department for Education and Skills, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department of Trade and Industry. There are also various agencies involved such as the LSC; Jobcentre Plus; [learnirect/Ufi](#); Worktrain and Business Link. Services are also supported by ESF, HEFCE and SRB while more general guidance is offered through Citizens' Advice Bureaux.

Outside the adult IAG framework, the role of the Connexions service for young people is also important. Indeed the local agencies running Connexions are often the same organisations contracted to deliver adult IAG².

The current budget for this work, routed through the LSC, is £24m (2002/03), rising to £34.5m in 2003/04. Partners currently deliver about 1.23m information sessions a year and about 0.3 million advice sessions. The LSC expects this to increase to 1.45m and 0.5m respectively³.

But why the need for change?

"Imperfect information is pervasive
and affects the decisions and choices made by
individuals, employers and suppliers..."

In Demand: Adult Skills in the 21st Century, PIU (2001)

This was the view of the influential report by the then Performance and Innovation Unit (now the Strategy Unit) which highlighted the problems of lack of IAG services.

¹ Page 4, *Information, Advice and Guidance: Towards a National Framework Discussion Document, DfES (2003)*

² NIACE, *What Adults Need: NIACE Perspective on a Skills Strategy*. NIACE, April 2003.

³ *ibid*

It stressed that good quality information is needed because individuals and firms need to be aware of the benefits of workforce development in order to make sound choices based on the expected returns. For this to happen all parties need easy and low cost ways of accessing information. Yet as the report highlights, IAG for adults has, over many years, had fairly low aspirations and is perceived to have been relatively poorly funded, particularly when compared with arrangements for young people.

The report proposed a focus on development of a national and local IAG service that is integrated for the customer and which exploits the potential of Worktrain. The report concluded that an integrated service should deliver:

- ❑ visible, accessible and joined up IAG services from the customer 's perspective;
- ❑ improved referral arrangements to make better use of the existing channels for the delivery of IAG services;
- ❑ a national entitlement to IAG for adults;
- ❑ IAG services of consistently high quality; and
- ❑ clear demonstration of IAG impact.

Indeed it is these proposals which have prompted the government to launch its recent discussion document on the future of IAG services (see above).

Good quality IAG was also recognised by the National Skills Task Force as essential to effective workforce development, and to creating and sustaining motivation for individuals to learn. The National Skills Task Force also found that stimulating informed demand for learning amongst individuals comprises four key components including providing access to information on future job and career opportunities and relevant learning provision and providing access to advice and guidance to help them interpret the information.

Professor Jonathan Brown⁴, a key academic in the field, suggests that the field of adult guidance has been characterised by a policy vacuum, partially filled by a series of initiatives and a multiplicity of short term projects. This in turn has left adult services meeting a whole series of structural and funding transitions supported by fragile and ever-changing cocktails of funding.

He suggests that what is required from the policy-makers is simple:

- ❑ Clear policy on adult guidance
- ❑ Stable delivery mechanisms within this policy
- ❑ Secure funding of mainstream services as defined by the policy
- ❑ Avoidance of "projectitis"
- ❑ Better feedback and understanding of the views of clients, practitioners and their managers
- ❑ Help to build-in service quality rather than impose it externally.

These points are also backed up by the findings of a national survey of IAG Partnerships⁵, where respondents were asked what they thought should be the main priorities for national IAG development. As well as calling for a specific government driven strategy with clear goals, improved coherence between agencies eg. Guidance Council, GAB, DfES, LSC and the development of an effective interface with the Connexions Service, respondents highlighted the following issues:

- ❑ More funding for IAG services.
- ❑ A higher national profile for IAG.
- ❑ Clearer picture of LSC requirements and an awareness of role of LSC in monitoring and evaluating quality, outcomes and benefits of IAG services to adults.
- ❑ The need to share good practice.
- ❑ More involvement of employers.
- ❑ Making IAG a priority in lifelong learning.
- ❑ Development of a more holistic approach to client need rather than concentrating on fixed definition of I, A and G.
- ❑ Engaging target groups eg. unemployed, those with a disability.
- ❑ Balancing network growth with quality delivery.
- ❑ Conducting a mapping exercise to determine the qualifications and experience of staff delivering IAG services.
- ❑ Longer term contracts (i.e. more than 1 year).
- ❑ Sustainability of services.

The NIACE report *What Adults Need: Perspectives on a Skills Strategy*, April 2003, highlights a number of weaknesses in the current arrangements.

It points to the fact that the Government and LSC priorities to support the Level 2 target, basic skills target, HE participation target and broader workforce development goals are not those which IAG Partnerships were set up to deliver. And whilst it stresses that many partnerships have been impressive in reaching out to excluded groups and communities there are, generally, underdeveloped links with the workplace.

The report also highlights the fact that Union Learning Representatives have driven the dynamic around workplace-focused IAG. It suggests that as the role of a learning representative is voluntarily assumed within autonomous organisations, Government and public agencies need to develop a new range of innovative incentives to work with them. Similarly the engagement of large numbers of employers cannot be assumed although research conducted by MORI for the Guidance Council shows clearly that employers are, invariably, the most common source of IAG.

It confirms that not enough is known about the nature, scale and impact of IAG services. And, whilst the DfES has recently commissioned a longitudinal study from IES and NICEC, the impact of IAG has yet to be properly measured. IAG Partnerships are also fragmented and lack a strong national brand.

IAG is also too often considered as a silo separate from teaching and learning. This is perhaps best illustrated by the publication of the Government discussion documents *Success for All: Reforming Further Education and Training* (DfES, 2002) in which IAG is barely mentioned.

The report is also concerned that whilst the LSC is to pilot "enhanced services" in all areas from August 2003, it is not yet apparent that all parts of the current system have the capacity to re-orientate what is offered, how and to whom. Although some IAG Partnerships have developed effective partnerships with Business Links and other employment-focused intermediaries, the orientation of others lies more with community-based outreach work than with industry and commerce.

In planning for the expansion and development of guidance in the future, NIACE proposes that:

- ❑ policy needs recognise the key role that employers and unions play in providing IAG;
- ❑ there is a need nationally to establish clear protocols for working with Business Link services and the Investors in People programme;
- ❑ development should also ensure that IAG is more closely integrated into teaching and learning strategies across the curriculum;
- ❑ re-invigorated learning partnerships, drawing upon the outcomes of strategic area reviews and FRESAs, should assume strategic co-ordination of IAG services and the need for maintaining separate partnerships should be reviewed; and
- ❑ provision would benefit from distinctive national branding.

Here in the region improvements in IAG provision have been identified as a priority through the Framework for Employment Skills Action (FRESA) process. There is currently no regional map of IAG services and therefore little understanding of the impact of this provision and its targeting. Further work is therefore needed to better understand the nature, scale and impact of IAG in the region. This will help in setting an agenda for improvement. The outcome of the Strategic Area Review process should also yield useful information about the nature of IAG provision.

One of the proposals to emerge from the FRESA is the possibility of a pilot to build on existing local services in one part of the region in order to establish a more comprehensive system of IAG. This would aim to demonstrate the value of such services and make the case for sustained and long term funding of provision.

The SLIM Learning Theme on IAG intends to provide a forum for a debate on the issues within the region. For further information contact Hilary on 01392 264 850 (m.h.todd@exeter.ac.uk).

⁴ Professor Jonathan Brown, *Guidance for Access, Learning and Life: Challenges for the Next Decade*, presentation at the Julie Hamill Memorial Lecture, November 2002

⁵ Towers H, *A National Survey of IAG Policy and Practice*, Suffolk IAG Partnership (2001)

Reviewsection

European funding is now an important source of finance for information, advice and guidance services. Here we take a look at Objective 2 European funds to see what's available and how to apply.

Objective 2 ESF: An Untapped Resource

Money! Money! Money! So sang ABBA on their seminal 1970s pop hit, but sadly never having bothered to listen to the rest of the record I'm not sure if they then mentioned ESF Objective 2 in any way at all. Nonetheless Money! Money! Money! could well be the title for this article largely penned by GOSW (*who supplied the useful information*). It focuses upon unspent ESF Objective 2 funds in the region. Now here at SLIM Towers we're not going to support a so-called 'dash for cash' but this is a useful resource that could help people in some of the most deprived areas of our region.

So if you have a project that needs supporting... and you're not too scared of the paperwork (it's got a lot better, honest), then read on...

Introduction

The Objective 2 Programme for the South West of England provides financial assistance from the European Community towards the costs of projects aimed at promoting economic regeneration. It offers two strands of funding, European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) and covers the specific programme area of West Devon, Torridge, North Devon, South Hams, Plymouth, parts of Torbay and Wesmt Somerset and five wards in inner city Bristol.

Objectives

The programme's main objectives are:

- To increase incomes.
- To increase the opportunities available to people, businesses and communities.
- To widen access to employment opportunities.
- To create and support sustainable communities.
- To protect and enhance the environmental assets within the programme area.

Funds

Total allocation of funds for the programme is £109M (ERDF and ESF), of which £87.5M for ERDF and £22M is for ESF. To date ERDF of £33M and ESF of £12M have been committed, leaving funds still available of £51M ERDF and £9.4M for ESF.

Whilst there has been considerable interest in ERDF with some measures in danger of being oversubscribed, there has been a relatively slow take up of ESF.

Examples of what could be funded

A total of six ESF projects have been approved to date, the largest of which formed part of a Bristol Action Plan which aims to address social and economic exclusion in the most disadvantaged communities in Bristol.

1 The Bristol Objective 2 Action Plan was launched in October 2001 to effectively deliver the Neighbourhood Renewal element of the South West Objective 2 programme, at a local level. There is a total of £6.7 million European funds available under the Action Plan, of which £1.4 million is from the European Social Fund (ESF). The area in central Bristol, eligible to receive the funding, comprises five of the city's most disadvantaged communities. Ashley, Easton, Lawrence Hill,



Windmill Hill and Filwood all fall within the 15% most deprived wards in England and have a combined population of 69,422. The ESF funds are being spent on projects that aim to remove barriers to employment and training for disadvantaged groups. Each funded project aims to alter people's perceptions, aspirations and attitudes to learning, and give them the confidence and skills to progress into employment. The Action Plan currently supports four such projects:

Pathways to Work and Bridging the Gap: Through targeted support and guidance, these projects enable people to access training and acquire the skills to progress into employment. They work directly with employers and support agencies to break down discriminatory barriers, provide work placements, basic skills and vocational training.

CEED New Media Training: The CEED project offers New Media training opportunities to predominantly black and minority ethnic young people. The project has developed links with local media employers to ensure that beneficiaries of training courses have access to employment opportunities in their chosen field.

IT Works: In the South Bristol ward of Filwood the IT works project offers local residents both in-house ICT courses and access to **learn**direct. Employers in the area increasingly demand a basic level of IT competency. The training offered by IT Works creates pathways into employment for members of the community, currently excluded from many employment opportunities.

2 One of the first projects approved in the Programme was the **Rural Skills** project located in West Devon. The Project aimed to contribute to the economic regeneration of West Devon by stimulating education and training among some of the most disadvantaged members of the community making for a more responsive and flexible workforce. It provided a three year rolling programme of 'tailor made' training, retraining and business start up workshops and seminars for people who live in the area. ESF of £175,110 was awarded for this project.

Priorities

The programme is split into three Priorities.

Priority 1 – Neighbourhood Renewal

The ESF measure in this priority is 1.3 'Pathways to Employment' - which aims to reduce labour market exclusion by assisting young people and disadvantaged groups in the targeted area to participate in the workforce. There are currently £2.3M funds remaining.

Priority 2 – Small/Medium Enterprise (SME Development, Technology and Innovation)

The ESF measure within this priority is measure 2.5 'Management and Skills Development for SME Development' - which aims to support the provision of management and skills development training for SMEs. £4M funds remaining.

Priority 3 – A Better Future for Traditional Economies.

The ESF measure within this priority is Measure 3.6 'HRD and Training Support for Traditional Economies' - which aims to increase skills levels and qualifications attainment in order that the traditional economies have access to a well qualified, adaptable workforce. £3M funds remaining.



How to apply

Objective 2 is a rolling programme (i.e. no bidding rounds) and all applications are submitted to GOSW in Plymouth. The secretariat will undertake eligibility checks on all applications, they will then be scored by a scoring panel and must achieve a score of at least 65%. If successful, projects will be referred to a Priority Entry Group (PEG) who will take a view on the quality of the application, how well it addresses the objectives and targets of the programme and whether the project meets the needs of the area and does not duplicate or displace existing activity. The PEG then make a recommendation to the Strategy and Working Group (SWG) who make the final recommendation to the Government Office for project support.

Applicants are advised to consult their local Learning and Skills Council prior to submitting an application to check whether funding may be available through Co-financing and that they are not duplicating any activity already taking place in the area.

Matched funding

Matched funding can be sought from the same sources as Objective 3 i.e. Learning and Skills Council, Regional Development Agency, Countryside Agency and any combination of public, private and voluntary sources, up to a maximum intervention rate of 45%. Matched funding must provide at least 55% of the total project cost.

ERDF Link

A further requirement is that applications must have a link with an ERDF funded project. This can be from the current Objective 2 Programme or the old Objective 2 and 5b Programmes (1994-1999) or Community Initiatives e.g. Leader, Konver. Applicants are advised to speak to the secretariat establishing a link is a barrier to them submitting an application and they will advise accordingly.

Further information

If you would like any further information you can access our website at www.gosw.gov.uk or contact Karen Edwards from the GOSW Plymouth Secretariat.

Telephone:
01752 635027

or e-mail:
kedwards.gosw@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk

Abstracts

Bringing IAG to the Workplace: An evaluation report (TUC Learning Services, 8 May 2003)

The report of an evaluation of a project managed and operated by the Trade Union Congress, National Learning Services. Financed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and supported by the TUC Equal Project 'Building Opportunities through Workplace Learning', the project began in December 2001, and completed in March 2003.

The intention of the project was to develop and deliver a strategy to maximise the trade union contribution to the delivery of quality information, advice and guidance in the workplace, in the context of TUC and DfES strategies for workforce development.

<http://www.learningservices.org.uk/national/learning-3121-f0.cfm>

Learner guidance and support: models used and staff views of effects on retention (LSDA, 1 March 03)

This report presents the findings of the West of England Learning and Skills Research Network (WoE LSRN) project which aimed to identify the models of learner guidance and support used in colleges and to identify staff views on how far this provision affects retention rates. The project addressed the following research questions: 'What models of delivery are used to provide learner guidance and support?' and 'what are the views of college staff on how far this provision affects retention rates?'

<http://www.lstda.org.uk/files/pdf/1437.pdf>

Evaluation of Adult Information, Advice and Guidance Partnerships (DfES, 11 June 2002)

This report presents the findings of surveys of IAG lead partners. The project aimed to evaluate progress made by partnerships in relation to their priorities, and the extent to which they were addressing the particular needs of disadvantaged people in their local area. The report outlines updates to the policy and operational context since the production of the interim and looks at IAG partnership structures. It assesses the level of impact that IAG partnerships have had on coherence, bidding for external funds and partnership performance and provides initial conclusions and recommendation.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR359.pdf>

Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole - Awareness of Post 16 Learning Options, 2002 - Overview Report (1 May 02)

The overall aim of the research is to provide evidence that will enable LSC Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole effectively to improve 'awareness' and knowledge of post-16 options amongst Year 10 and 11 pupils.

The research gathers information from Year 10 and 11 pupils, their parents, year group tutors and careers teachers, so that the different perspectives of all the main parties involved can be considered. It is also designed to evaluate 'CragRats' (an initiative to improve pupils' 'awareness' of their post-16 options, using drama) and to assess pupils' and teachers' opinions of locally produced careers literature.

Information, Advice and Guidance in Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises: The Views, Attitudes and Perceptions of Some Owner/Managers (March 2002)

This pilot research project sought to elicit the views, attitudes and perceptions of some SME owner/managers to IAG in the workplace. The objective was to find answers to some of the following questions:

- How aware are they of local IAG services?
- What are their perceptions of the value or otherwise of IAG [1] for their workforce [especially those with low skill levels] and 2] for their business?
- How amenable would they be to IAG being offered to their employees?

The report looks at training – including attitudes towards training; perceived value of training; funding for training; and barriers to training.

It goes on to explore issues around Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) which include: Awareness of IAG services and Understanding the System; Language as a barrier to Access; How these employers are accessing information; When Information is not available; How Employers seek Advice in relation to Training; Value of Guidance for Employees; the Employer as a source of IAG; and Information, Advice and Guidance in the Workplace

<http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/SL1279.doc>

IAG Checklist Project Report - A National Survey of IAG Policy and Practice 2001 (DfES 2001)

The impetus for this project came from an awareness that, although Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) partnerships throughout the country have all been required to comply with the framework set out within the DfES specification, there may be varying approaches/methodologies within this framework. The Checklist document is the end result of this project and has been compiled from information submitted by 57 IAG partnerships in response to 2 separate questionnaires covering most aspects of IAG work. This is not an analytical report, but focuses more on the original purpose of the project which is to enable partnerships to tell each other how they do things, how successful particular ways of working are and what problems have been encountered along the way.

<http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/iag/check.pdf>



Events

Retention in HE: Integrated Approaches to Student Success

17 June 03 Victoria Park Plaza
1-day conference to look at innovative, proactive retention strategies for all stages of the student life cycle, with a focus on the particular challenges that face non-traditional students
info@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

Diverting Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour: the role of Sports and the Arts

17 June 03 Commonwealth Institute
1 day conference to examine the role of recreational activities in diverting young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour.
info@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

Gloucestershire Learning Partnership Annual Conference

17 June 03 British Energy Conference Centre, Barnett Way, Barnwood, Gloucester
Participants will: be updated on local, regional and national initiatives and developments; learn about and celebrate the success of local projects; contribute ideas on ways learning can influence the agendas of regeneration and sustainability in the county; meet and explore ways of working with colleague members of the Learning Partnership.
Email: keggermo@gloscc.gov.uk

Understanding Whitehall and Government: The Higher Education Sector

18 June 03 Thistle Hotel, Westminster, London SW1
1-day seminar focusing on the relationship between central government and the HE sector, and the ways in which central government policies influence the funding, duties and actions of the sector.
info@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

From Bologna to Berlin: The Implications of the Bologna Process for HE in the UK

24 June 03 The Barbican Centre
This timely conference will raise awareness of the major issues arising from the Bologna Process which aims to create a European Higher Education Area.
ralph.stokes@neilstewartassociates.co.uk

Canadian Summer Institute 2003: Literacy and Health: Prescription for progress

26 June 03 Montreal, Quebec, Canada
26-28 June 03 (corrected dates), 3-day facilitated exchange that will explore questions, enlarge understanding and identify strategies to move literacy health policy and practice forward across local, national and international boundaries
literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca

Evidence-Based Policies and Indicator Systems Conference

09 July 03 Church House Conference Centre
3-day conference run jointly by the CEM Centre and Cabinet Office
EB2003@cem.dur.ac.uk

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slim quarterly bulletin is produced by
The Marchmont Observatory

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Research to Improve Practice: Learning & Skills Research Network Conference for the South West Region

11 July 03 Dillington House
The conference will be jointly hosted by the South West and West Country Learning and Skills Research Networks. The conference provides a forum for show-casing and debating regional and local research findings in post-16 education and training.
arice@lsda.org.uk

Researching Policy and Practice in Vocational Education and Training

16 July 03 Royal Naval College, Greenwich
16-18 July 03, the Journal of Vocational Education and Training 5th International Conference will take place at the Royal Naval College, University of Greenwich.
b.bailey@greenwich.ac.uk

BERA Annual Conference

11 Sept 03 Heriot-Watt University
11-13 Sept 03 Annual Conference; 11-13 Sept 03 Research Student Symposium
claire@in-conference.org.uk

RNIB South West Regional Conference: S 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000

10 Nov 03 Taunton Rugby Club
1-day conference to address the implications for disabled young people in transition and those who work with them.
e&esouthwest@rnib.org.uk

Who's who in the South West



Interview with Sue Kay of Culture South West

1 Hi Sue, could you please take a moment to explain a little about yourself and your background and how you got involved with Culture South West?

I was appointed as Executive Director of Culture South West in June 2002. I've worked in the cultural sector for over 25 years now, 18 of them in the South West. Most recently I was Director of Arts Management at Dartington College of Arts. Prior to that I was Joint Co-ordinator of Arts Training South West - so issues around informal learning and continuing professional development have been important to me for quite some time.

2 Could you explain a little more about the role of Culture South West, including its history and how it is funded?

Culture South West was born in 1999 when Chris Smith, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport established eight Regional Cultural Consortiums to, in his words "bring together people who can make the most of culture and creativity in each part of England". We have a board of twelve, chaired by Adrian Vinken (Chief executive of Plymouth theatre Royal); a staff of three (I work with Lucy Wurstlin, Creative Industries Development Manager and our Administrator, Sarah Gooding); and an office with the South West Regional Development Agency in Exeter. We are funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and we receive financial support from SWRDA too.

3 What are Culture South West's day to day activities?

Our work involves research, campaigning, collaborative projects, promotions, cross-sectoral training initiatives, conferences and seminars. Everything we do involves partnerships with others. We've recently published the first issue of our newsletter and completely re-vamped our website (www.culturesouthwest.org.uk) so we can keep people up to date with what we're doing and get very valuable feedback.

4 Reading the recently published Regional Economic Strategy for the South West last night (I really do need to get out more), I note that the vision now identifies that the 'cultural environment' is key to the success of the South West. Was this at the behest of Culture South West and is this real progress?

Culture South West responded to successive drafts of the Regional Economic Strategy on behalf of the region's cultural agencies, and we were very clear about the importance of cultural assets and activities to regional prosperity. Culture is vital both to our economy and the self-confidence we project - underpinning our growing reputation as a go-ahead and innovative region. SWRDA has identified both Tourism and the Creative Industries as particularly important sectors in the South West.

5 I understand that you are doing some work on 'leadership' in the sector. Could you explain a little more about this work and other initiatives you are involved in?

Culture South West supports an Education and Training Group comprising representatives of all the region's cultural agencies and the lottery distributors. Last year the group commissioned research to identify some of the training and development needs which are shared across the cultural sector in the region ('Cultural Sector Skills in the South West: an overview', April 2002). Issues around leadership emerged as a common theme and in April we gathered together 30 people from across the region to explore what a cultural sector leadership programme might cover and how it might be delivered. The ideas that emerged are now being worked into a proposal for a pilot project that links to the leadership development work of SWRDA and the Centre for Leadership Studies at Exeter University.

6 There is very little information about the skills needs within the region's cultural sector. Will you be carrying out any research to plug this gap?

In the coming year SWRDA and CSW will be commissioning an important creative industries mapping exercise across the region that will have a significant skills dimension. Existing skills-needs research is unevenly spread, however, and there is undoubtedly an issue around locating and joining up data across the cultural sector as a whole. CSW has recently commissioned a piece of work entitled 'Joining the Dots: an audit and analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative research data on the cultural sector in the South West' and this will include identifying and appraising what skills-needs research we have; where the gaps are and what should happen next.

7 How important to the South West is the cultural sector? And what do you perceive its key training and skills needs to be?

The cultural sector is vitally important to the region! Survey after lifestyle survey confirms it: the South West is where the majority of people in the country would live if they had absolute freedom of choice. And if they choose to holiday in Britain, again, they say they would come west. Twenty one million of them prove the point by doing that each year. The region has an almost magnetic pull and most of the five million or so of us already born or drawn here would say it has something to do with 'quality of life' which is inextricably bound up with the region's cultural activities, resources and environment.

8 In a few years time what role will Culture South West have in improving the skills of those within the sector?

Those who work in the cultural sector - both paid and unpaid - are an incredibly valuable resource. Again, working with our partners, I hope we will have made a significant difference to the level, scale and accessibility of cross-sectoral skills and training provision within the region so that creative talent is attracted and retained, and the quality and relevance of cultural activities continues to rise. And by that time, I'll be retired and reaping the benefits as a voluntary participant and consumer!

