



SLIM-lines

The Newsletter of the Skills and Learning Intelligence Module (SLIM)
of the South West Observatory

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Say what you want about the universe but it has worked wonders with minimal resources. It started off with a very small - admittedly very dense - volume of matter, but given 13.73bn years it managed to create, among other things: spiral galaxies, black holes, mud, the Sector Skills Development Agency, confusion, that nice feeling when you first won at conkers, a stick, a dog and a box with something in it. But now it is time for one of those to disappear... yes it now seems a very long time since the Leitch Review but the repercussions are still very much with us... and quite frankly considering the subsequent number of reports and papers produced, I'm relieved that I took that ultra-speed reading course in 1987 that once enabled me to read *The Brothers Karamazov* in fifteen minutes... but I digress... this Monday sees the end of the SSDA and this Tuesday sees the launch of the all-new, shiny UK Commission for Employment and Skills. It will operate across the UK and "play a central role in raising the UK's skills base, improving productivity and competitiveness, increasing employment and making a contribution to a fairer society. It will play a critical part in securing for the UK the ambitions of achieving a world class profile on skills by 2020 and the aspiration of an 80% employment rate." Isn't the universe an amazing thing...? For more information on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills please visit <http://www.ukces.org.uk/>. CIAO! Andy

SLIM-Comment: Raising Expectations:

Machinery of Government and Sub-National Review make an impact

Here we take a look at the new Government paper - Raising Expectations: enabling the system to deliver (Joint DCSF/DIUS consultation). Many of the outcomes have already been communicated – loss of the LSC, the arrival of the Commission for Employment and Skills and shifting emphasis to Local Authorities. So the LSCs are finally to close, but not until 2010, with their responsibilities being split between Local Authorities, a Young People's Learning Agency - charged with helping local authorities work coherently together in providing for the 14 -19 age bracket, and the Skills Funding Agency to administer the flow of £4bn of public money a year to colleges and training organisations.

<http://www.swslim.org.uk/documents/comments/ed-18-20.3.8.pdf>

Towards a 2026 vision: have your say on the future of our countryside

Invites views on areas which are important to those who care about the countryside in order to spark a national debate about the future of the English countryside. Covers the future of food and farming, life in cities, towns and villages, planning, lifestyle and leisure, and climate change.

<http://www.cpre.org.uk/news/view/473>

Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's talent – Summary

This strategy presents important new policy priorities, which will have a significant impact on every entrepreneur and business in the UK. The Government wants more people to have the ambition to start and grow businesses – and have access to the skills, advice, support and finance they need to innovate and succeed, as well as enjoying a favourable regulatory environment.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/722983>

Thought for today

Three billion people on the face of the earth go to bed hungry every night, but four billion people go to bed every night hungry for a simple word of encouragement and recognition.

Cavett Robert

The SLIM-lines is made possible thanks to contributions from the Regional Development Agency and the OBJECTIVE 3 (ESF) TA Publicity Fund.

Next steps in Rural Development Programme

The South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA) is advertising for an organisation to provide Grant Administration Services for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) in the region from September. The grant administration services will be central to the operation of RDPE - launched in the region on February 4 - and will carry out appraisals, recommend approvals, liaise with the South West RDA on claims and carry out post-implementation spot checks.

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/news/release.asp?ReleaseID=2419>

Launch of £80m Regional Infrastructure Fund

An £80 million fund to pump-prime major infrastructure projects in the South West was declared "open for business" recently by the South West of England Regional Development Agency. This is the first fund of its kind in the country. The Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) will provide seed investment to ensure major infrastructure projects in the region are delivered in a timely manner to help unlock the region's business potential. It is set to revolutionise regeneration projects in the South West of England.

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/downloads/document.asp?lang=&documentid=1919>

Applications to University at Record Levels

New figures published by UCAS show that applications to universities in England for 2008 are at an all time high. The number of applicants from lower socio-economic groups has also increased - with the proportion of all applicants aged 18 and under in these groups showing a slight rise from 28% in 2007 to 29% in 2008.

http://www.ucas.ac.uk/website/news/media_releases/2008/2008-02-14

The People's Millions - Big Lottery Fund

The People's Millions has proved to be an exciting venture for Big Lottery Fund, breaking new ground by giving people a say in how lottery money is spent in local communities throughout the UK. This year they hope to fund 90 new People's Millions projects that aim to make a difference in their local community. The maximum grant available will be £50,000 plus VAT and the closing day for entries is 15 May 2008.

http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_peoples_millions

Lantra and Business Link South West working together to develop businesses

Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land-based industries, has teamed up with Business Link South West to help businesses in the region develop through training and skills. Together they organised a Get Growing event, held in February at Dillington House, Ilminster, as part of an information campaign developed by Train to Gain, which aims to encourage environmental and land-based industries to grow by developing their staff. <http://www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/Default.aspx?page=4591>

Equality and diversity in LAAs: an aide memoir for locality managers

This is a briefing note for GOs, particularly Locality Managers and Lead Negotiators to act as an aide memoir when considering equalities in an LAA context. The consideration of equalities in a LAA context should mean that no group or place is left behind. It should effectively sharpen up the focus of LAAs to achieve better outcomes for equalities groups.

http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/publications/LAAs_checklist.doc

Impact of learning on employability: main report

Assesses the wider impact of learning in terms of motivation and social benefits. Presents evidence on employment and benefit outcomes. Finds that further education learning contributes to both economic and social inclusion objectives.

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/Impact_of_Learning_on_Employability_-_main_report.pdf

Jobs and Mental Health - Understanding the Impact of the Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot for People with Mental Health Conditions

This report summarises the findings from a study on people with mental health conditions who used Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot services. They had a lower rate of return to work than those who did not use the service. <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/732446>

New Reports and Publications

Sainsbury Review - Implementing the Race to the Top: Lord Sainsbury's review of Government's science and innovation policies

This document sets out the Government's response to an independent review of science and innovation policies. It also sets out the key steps that must be taken across the public and private sectors, to make Britain a society of innovation.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/722960>

Enterprise: Unlocking the UK's talent – Summary

This strategy sets out the Government's renewed vision to make the UK the most enterprising economy in the world and the best place to start and grow a business. The opportunities in today's modern, global economy are immense. The consequent international flows of goods, services, technology and ideas, and increasing environmental pressures, present unprecedented opportunities for those enterprising individuals and businesses which are able to compete successfully in global markets.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/722983>

Sustaining rural communities: a call for action - Rural Services Network

Having considered and codified the response to the consultation, the Rural Services Network identifies the following as being of critical importance to the future sustainability of towns, villages and settlements in the countryside... http://www.rsonline.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=226&Itemid=118

Supporting people to get on in the labour market

This paper examines the changing conditions of the UK labour market and the barriers that hold individuals back. This paper reviews the evidence relating to helping adults to progress in work. It also highlights ambiguities and gaps in this evidence and suggests issues for further analysis.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/729895>

Developing a prosperous future (economic development)

Looks at the new economic development responsibilities placed on local authorities in the Sub-national review of economic development and regeneration consultation paper and explains that the review proposes a number of changes to bureaucracy which would mean easier local access to funding and agreement of strategies with the regional development agencies (RDAs). *IN Local Government Chronicle, 6 Mar 2008*

Recruitment and Training Among Large National Employers

The Learning and Skills Council has published survey findings on the recruitment and training of large national employers. The research was undertaken by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and IFF Research and included a survey of 201 large national employers, including 60 member companies of the National Employer Service (NES), and follow-up case study research. http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/summary/summary.php?id=lsc_070226

Sector Skills Agreements: The State of Play

The impact of the SSA on the way SSCs work has been significant and has probably accelerated their development considerably. High-quality LMI, assessment of current provision and gap analysis, is necessary but not sufficient to bring about changes to decisions on funding and planning provision; complementary work on lobbying and policy negotiation at the highest levels is fundamental. The SSAs could never have delivered the original vision of going 'beyond voluntarism' in terms of employer investment in skills without swifter, more radical change to other parts of the skills and training infrastructure, particularly the reform of the funding and qualification framework.

<http://www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/default.aspx?page=41>

Local USP: boosting the creative economy

In this report, we set out:

- The importance of the creative industries both to the national economy and local economies;
- The local government track record in developing the local creative economy;
- The case for a stronger local role; and
- The challenges facing the creative economy and the ways in which local government can help the creative sector address them.

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/aio/265733>

New Reports and Publications continued...

Activity and Learning Agreements Pilot: programme theory evaluation - working paper 2. Signing up to a Learning Agreement

This paper is part of the programme theory strand of the ALA Pilots evaluation. This is a realist evaluation method which focuses on testing some of the key 'theories' which underlie the ALA policy to identify which components of the policy work (or not), how, for whom, why, and in what circumstances.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/DCSF-RW029.pdf>

Best practice in inter-agency co-operation on employability

The research aimed to investigate best practice in inter-agency co-operation, both at the strategic level of partnership working between policy actors, and at the operational level, where local professionals work together to implement programmes. By sharing ownership of, and responsibility for, the content and management of employability programmes with local stakeholders, government can help develop and implement policies that are more responsive to local labour market needs, have credibility with communities and clients, and benefit from the 'buy-in' of key agencies and employers.

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/bestpracticereportemployability.pdf>

Developing a robust evidence base

Local authorities need to understand the key drivers forming the social, economic and environmental characteristics of their area. This evidence base should be built from contributions across the council and its partners. The Planning Advisory Service has produced guidance to help councils develop a robust evidence base for their key visioning documents, such as the sustainable community strategy and local development framework. <http://list.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/t/11504/76704/2032/0/>

Migrant workers in the South West

The research study, Migrant Workers in the South West, was commissioned by the South West Regional Development Agency (RDA) and undertaken by the South West Skills and Learning Intelligence Module (SLIM) during the autumn of 2007. It also forms part of a programme of research in support of the South West Regional Skills Partnership (RSP). The research aimed to gain a greater understanding of the scale and nature of migrant working in the region and the impact on business and the economy.

<http://www.swslim.org.uk/downloads/sl2561.pdf>

The distribution and returns to qualifications in the four countries of the UK

This report presents estimates of the variation in the distribution of, and returns to, qualifications across the four countries of the UK – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Data are reported for the supply and utilisation of qualifications in each country, as well as of the relative demand and supply of skills as indicated by the differential wage returns to qualifications.

<http://www.ssda.org.uk/ssda/pdf/Report%2021a.pdf>

Creative Britain: new talents for the new economy

The challenge is as much for government as it is for business, but the action plan we put forward here is a sign of our intent. Now is the time to recognise the growing success story that is Britain's creative economy and build on that. The creative industries must move from the margins to the mainstream of economic and policy thinking, as we look to create the jobs of the future.

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/096CB847-5E32-4435-9C52-C4D293CDECFD/0/CEPFeb2008.pdf>

Vocational qualifications in the UK: 2006/07

This Statistical First Release (SFR) updates the information presented in the Statistical First Release 'Vocational Qualifications in the UK: 2005/06', SFR 05/2007, published on 22 February 2007. Unlike in previous years this SFR concentrates purely on the achievement of accredited vocational qualifications.

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000773/SFR03-2008.pdf>

Latest Labour Market Data – South West

Labour Force Survey data for the South West indicate that the trend in the employment rate is increasing, but the latest rate is not significantly different from a year ago. The trend in the unemployment rate is close to flat, and the latest rate is not significantly different from a year ago. Data for the three months to December 2007 show the seasonally adjusted employment rate at 79.3%, up 0.9% on a year earlier. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.7%, down 0.1% on a year earlier. The seasonally adjusted claimant count was down in the year to January 2008. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsswest0208.pdf>

Timms: Employment at a new record high

Figures out today show the number of people in employment has increased to a new record high of 29.46 million. At the same time the numbers claiming Jobseekers Allowance continues to fall for the seventeenth consecutive month, remaining the lowest claimant count for 32 years. The new figures, issued by the Office for National Statistics, show unemployment has fallen by 32,000 on the quarter with 89,000 fewer people unemployed compared to a year ago. The number of vacancies remains high at 678,500. Stephen Timms, Minister for Employment said: "Once again this is a strong set of figures. There have never been more people in work in the UK. Our employment rate of 74.8% continues to be above that of most other countries within the EU." <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=728614>

A report card for the UK: Options for Britain II

How has Britain done in the last decade? How well has the Government performed? What are the big choices that face us in the next decade? These questions were addressed at a recent conference in Nuffield College, Oxford to mark the start of 'Options for Britain II'. The project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Gatsby, aims to provide an independent, rigorous audit of the UK's economic, social and constitutional progress and future options. <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/>

Latest from the EU

STUDY VISITS - Call for applications 2008/2009

It concerns study visits that will take place from September 2008 until June 2009. This is an excellent way of discovering good practice from other states – and of particular benefit to those looking to build new projects and partnerships. A catalogue covering that period and an online application form are available on the following website: <http://studyvisits.cedefop.europa.eu>

European Future Skills Needs

The demand for skills and qualifications is being driven upwards by the continuing rise of the service sector and sweeping technological and organisational changes. Among the figures provided by Cedefop are those that forecast a rise of 12.5 million jobs at the highest qualification level between 2006 and 2015. This is in contrast to a decline of 8.5 million jobs for workers with low qualifications.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/index.asp?section=3&sub=6&read=3130>

Celebrate Europe Day 2008

The annual Europe Day celebrations mark the day in 1950 when the proposal was presented which led to the creation of what is now the European Union. http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/index_en.htm

Learning together for local innovation: promoting learning regions

Useful report that takes case studies from different parts of the EU to draw good practice lessons on building innovative local and regional communities. It also looks at the potentially significant role that universities may have in building and supporting learning regions.

http://bookshop.eu.int/eubookshop/FileCache/PUBPDF/TI7305356ENC/TI7305356ENC_002.pdf

Working for the regions: EU regional policy 2007-2013

Outlines the future of regional policy in Europe which will focus on cohesion-based initiatives aimed at boosting job creation and supporting regional growth in all EU member states. Suggests that cohesion policy is having a positive impact across the regions of the EU.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/presenta/working2008/work_en.pdf

Age and Demography latest from SWOOP

Having a keen interest in flexible working and sustainability, doing two part-time jobs* and working on a project focusing on age demographics (plus with teenagers and ageing parents)... the paragraph in the Guardian article on 14/3/08 struck a chord, writes Alan Denbigh. A report on the nature of employment in 2018 predicts an exodus from the traditional workplace caused partly by environmental pressure to reduce the carbon footprint of commuting and partly by the demographic pressure of an ageing population, with fewer employees able to avoid looking after older relatives, leading to a blurring of boundaries between family and career. Ominously it says the future promises: less talk about "work-life balance" and more about "work-life integration".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2008/mar/14/workandcareers.worklifebalance>

**Prizes offered for a better description of 'part-time'*

The age agenda 2008: public policy and older people

Assesses public policy on ageing and older people, focusing on the areas of: income and finance, equality and human rights, health and health services, care and care services, social inclusion and communities, housing, and work and learning. Contains annexes looking at Public Service Agreements and the Government's record on social exclusion.

http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/Documents/AA_2008_Report.pdf

70 Year Old Fitness Instructor Wins Back Job

A 70-year-old fitness instructor who was told she was too old to take classes has been reinstated. The Council had decided not to renew Mrs Powis's contract to teach her pop mobility fitness class last month on the eve of her 70th birthday. The Council reversed its decision after the case received widespread media attention. This included Mrs Powis's appearance on BBC One's 'Breakfast' television programme discussing her case along with TAEN's Chief Executive, Chris Ball.

<http://www.taen.org.uk/news/agebusters.php?action=fullnews&id=5271>

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society

From Communities and Local Government (formerly ODPM). The ageing of the population will be one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century for housing. This strategy sets out our response to this challenge, our plan to create Lifetime Homes in Lifetime Neighbourhoods. It outlines our plans for making sure that there is enough appropriate housing available in future to relieve the forecasted unsustainable pressures on homes, health and social care services.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/lifetimehomesneighbourhoods>

Feeding into the housing strategy

Researchers at the University of York undertook eight focus groups composed of 'younger' older people (aged 48 to 64), and 'older' old people (aged 65 and above) to explore the influences on participants' housing decisions, and their future housing intentions & aspirations.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/newhorizonsresearch>

In the driving seat- PM Guide to Health and Well-being supplement

As the costs related to workplace absence soar (£659 per head according to the CIPD), so the business case is mounting for boardrooms to buy in to health at work. Couple these costs with almost daily reports about the problems linked to obesity and our ageing workforce and we find more employers, particularly larger corporations, grasping the notion that health at work should mean just that - not merely managing the health of staff on sick leave.

http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/pm/articles/inthedrivingseat.htm?name=_guide&type=section

Realising Britain's potential: future strategic challenges for Britain

Discussion paper from the Strategy Unit of the Cabinet Office includes a section on the population picture: supporting a growing, ageing and more diverse population.

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/strategic_challenges.pdf

Alan Denbigh

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Conferences and Events

14-19 Funding: FE and Local Authorities: Future partnerships

1 April, Central London

<http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jd200/>

14-19 Diplomas: Signposting the Future

2 April, New Connaught Rooms, WC2

<http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jd199/>

Think Family: Improving the life chances of families at risk

2 April 2008

[http://www.campaign-for-](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/events/Think_Family_Improving_the_life_chances_of_families_at_risk_2April2008.asp)

[learning.org.uk/cfl/events/Think_Family_Improving_the_life_chances_of_families_at_risk_2April2008.asp](http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/cfl/events/Think_Family_Improving_the_life_chances_of_families_at_risk_2April2008.asp)

Expanding and Delivering Apprenticeships

3 April, Thistle Marble Arch Hotel, London WC1

<http://www.neilstewartassociates.com/jd196/>

Dorset Heritage & Cultural Tourism Event

11 April 2008, Kingston Maurward, near Dorchester, Dorset

A networking event for commercial and 3rd sector organisations located in Dorset

Contact: vbennion@aib.ac.uk

ECLO's 2008

15 and 16 May, Danubius Hotel Gellert, Budapest

<http://www.eclo.org/>

South West Workshop on the Accreditation of Prior Learning

22 May 2008, Taunton Conference Centre, Somerset College of Art and Technology

Email: cpateman@bournemouth.ac.uk

"IMPROVING THE ODDS" Sustaining Employment

22 May 2008, Exeter Racecourse, Kennford, Exeter

To enable participants to feel more supported and informed in their work with people whose mental health affects their ability to find or sustain employment.

<http://www.workways.org.uk>

A Welfare State Fit for the 21st Century: The Next Steps to Full Employment

3 June 2008, Westminster.

<http://insidegovernment.msgfocus.com/c/15qtEVnzkielNs8>

Employment Week 2008

11 – 12 June, Brussels

<http://www.employmentweek.com/>

Welfare to Work Convention 2008

25 - 26 June 2008, ICC Birmingham

<http://www.cesi.org.uk/Events/showevone.asp>

End Notes

If you have seen any useful resources, are organising any interesting events, or want to pass on some information through SLIM - contact us at: a.dean@exeter.ac.uk