



SLIM-lines

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

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With my early morning desperation to get out of the house, the lack of traffic on the roads and the dread sense that the kids are planning something unpleasant for my return, I suspect that we have started Easter Holidays 2. Not to be confused with Easter Holidays 1 – which was at Easter. Probably. Anyway getting exciting ideas of things to do to keep the house-apes happy is always a challenge, so here are a few tips to help those unable to take any more arguments over the merits of Hannah Montana...

1. Play with the pets ... though this pet is clearly thinking about murder
<http://teaching.mrbelshaw.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/07/lolcat-annoyed.jpg>
2. Premiership DIY - Do up your house just like a footballer... say Philip Neville... for instance. NICE!
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/gallery/2008/apr/03/property.houseprices?picture=333371557>
3. Find something new to do with your i-pod...
<http://www.silicon.com/silicon/hardware/storage/0,39024649,39166426-1,00.htm>
4. Sort out a few suitcases, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7321241.stm>
5. Give up and go to Mars with Virgin and Google... Oh cripes! It's an April-Fool... Well I never would have guessed... How they must have chortled. <http://www.google.com/virgle/>
6. Or finally, take off your shirt and just dance until the pain stops...
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ABqh9N-Mw5E>. You know, I really must go back to Ibiza... [Andy](#)

House of Lords' Report: "The Economic Impact of Immigration"

"Overall GDP, which the Government has persistently emphasised is an irrelevant and misleading criterion for assessing the economic impacts of immigration on the UK. The total size of an economy is not an index of prosperity. The focus of analysis should rather be on the effects of immigration on income per head of the resident population. In the long run, the main economic effect of immigration is to enlarge the economy, with relatively small costs and benefits for the incomes of the resident population."

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldselect/ldconaf/82/82.pdf>

Prosperous places - Taking forward the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration

This consultation sets out and seeks views on the proposals contained in the SNR for putting in place reforms that would:

- streamline the regional tier, introducing integrated strategies and giving the regional development agencies (RDAs) lead responsibility for regional planning;
- strengthen the local authority role in economic development;
- support collaboration by local authorities across economic areas.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/consultations/734408>

Consultation: Promoting achievement, valuing success - A strategy for 14-19 qualifications

This consultation seeks views on proposals for a qualifications system in which every young person can prepare themselves through education and training to make a success of their life.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/consultations/734344>

Thought for today

Make three correct guesses consecutively and you will establish a reputation as an expert.
Laurence J. Peter

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

The City & Guilds' new Institute, also known as the Centre for Skills Development, has been launched

This is an independent research and development body under the City & Guilds Group, aiming at improving the policy and practice of work-related education and training internationally. It has 'core activities' such as building networks, promoting vocational skills and undertaking research. There are 'interventions' development projects in vocational education and training; and it offers consultancy, on a fee-paying basis where the income generated will fund more interventions and core activity. The stress is very much on the international dimension. <http://www.skillsdevelopment.org>. The site also has a very handy list of hot-links for policy, practice and research news in the VET (vocational education and training) field: <http://www.cityandguilds.com/sites/cgi/news.htm>

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills opens for business

The UKCES opened for business on 1 April 2008. 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. For more information on the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, please visit <http://www.ukces.org.uk/>.

Single Hub for all PSA and LAA indicators

A single set of National Indicators will be used from April 2008 and the content of those indicators will be held in the Data Interchange Hub. The Hub will provide a secure centralised data storage and a mechanism for data interchange for government departments and local strategic partnerships (LSPs) to help with collating and monitoring of the national indicators incorporating local area agreements (LAAs). The Hub will reduce the burden for local authorities in collating data from many different sources and also ensure that they have all the information they need from one source to gauge their performance against the national indicator set. <http://www.hub.info4local.gov.uk/>

Help for people who can't work due to ill-health

People who have had to stop working due to ill health will soon be able to get early assistance from the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS), announced Pensions Minister Mike O'Brien. Draft regulations, published today for consultation, will mean people who have to stop working early because of poor health will be able to get payments from the FAS up to five years before their scheme's normal retirement age. <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2008/mar/pens064-280308.asp>

National Year of Reading

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, Ed Balls, said: "I want this year to kick start a change in the way we all view reading and for us all to regain a love of reading and pass it on to the next generation. Parents can be key in leading this renaissance by making time to read with their children every day when they are young and encouraging them to carry on reading as they get older - just a few minutes every day can make a real difference." <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=736171>

Will the UK learn anything from the Olympics? – EVENT - 2 July 2008

As preparations for the Olympics come to a climax in Beijing, we are becoming increasingly aware of the learning required to run such huge projects. Whether it is schools developing interactive programmes like mini-Olympics or China's extensive programme to teach the population basic English, the Olympics is an opportunity to increase skills on a national and local level. China may also be facing up to the more uncomfortable aspects of learning, such as petitioners finding out more about human rights and the pressure of being in the global spotlight. The Beijing Olympics marks just four years until the 2012 Olympics in the UK, and this National Learning Forum plans to debate the question: [Will the UK learn anything from the Olympics?](#)

Consultation for SWRDA Race Equality Scheme

- Bristol 21 May 2008, 9.30am
- Plymouth 23 May 2008, 9.30am

To facilitate consultation on the revision of the RDA's Race Equality Scheme.

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New Reports and Publications

National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority

Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions

This publication below gives final detailed definitions for 198 national indicators following consultation on their proposed definition. Following receipt of the responses and discussion with other Government Departments, the Government has decided to drop one indicator, NI 31 - Re-offending by registered s*x offenders, and added one new indicator - NI 199. 185 national indicators came into force on 1 April 2008. The remaining 13 indicators will be subject to further consultation in the summer before final definitions for them can be released. Guidance on the methodology for the Place Survey will be issued shortly.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/finalnationalindicators>

City regions: urban development report

Read this new analysis on the development of modern cities by the Centre for Cities. The paper suggests that city economies are open, and the progress of modern cities has been driven and shaped by their relationship with other urban areas. <http://list.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/t/11774/76704/945/0/>

LAA's: launch of 'Partnerships and Places Library'

The IDeA has launched the new 'Partnerships and Places Library' of good practice. It tells stories of innovation that help to deliver better local outcomes. The library, which will continue to grow and respond to the sector's needs, already houses 200 up-to-date evidence-based case studies and other materials that support sector-led improvement. <http://list.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/t/11774/76704/2058/0/>

The latest DIUS Skills for Life Update magazine (no. 24, for Winter 2007/08)

This magazine is aimed at everyone who is providing basic skills learning opportunities and those interested in improving the literacy, language and numeracy skills of adults. The magazine will help keep you up-to-date with what's new in the field of Skills for Life. It is now available to download in PDF format by clicking here: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/bank/3738_Update_24_AW_low-res.pdf

The English Indices of Deprivation 2007

This report presents the conceptual framework of the new Indices of Deprivation 2007 (ID 2007); the component indicators and domains; the methodology for creating the domains and the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation; the Lower Super Output Area level results and the Local Authority summary results.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/733520>

Immigration, faith and cohesion: evidence from local areas with significant Muslim populations

This research set out to investigate the factors which contribute to or undermine community cohesion in areas where there are a significant number of Muslim residents. It provides new data from three local areas in Birmingham, Bradford and Newham, where relatively large numbers of recently arrived Muslim migrants and established Muslim residents are living alongside people of other faiths and of none.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2189-immigration-faith-cohesion.pdf>

Life chances: supporting people to get on in the labour market - an analytical discussion paper

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. The paper is intended to stimulate a wider discussion on how best to take forward research and to develop policy in this area. Over the coming months, the Strategy Unit will continue to engage with researchers and experts in the area to refine the Government's evidence base.

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/life_chances_180308.pdf

Employment rising... but European workers not receiving fair share of economic wealth

Since the launch of the Lisbon Strategy, the ETUC together with the ETUI-REHS has produced an annual Benchmarking publication for the European Social Summit. This year's report highlights the issues of quality employment and the need to ensure that the European workforce receives a fair share of economic gains. The report notes that while employment is undoubtedly rising, this increase has been achieved through the creation of non-standard forms of employment. Wages are also suffering. European workers are not receiving real increases in pay in line with the real growth. <http://www.etui-rehs.org/research/Publications/Regular-publications/Benchmarking-Working-Europe/Benchmarking-Working-Europe-2008>

<http://www.etui-rehs.org/research/Publications/Regular-publications/Benchmarking-Working-Europe/Benchmarking-Working-Europe-2008>

New Reports and Publications continued...

Review of Economic Assessment and Strategy Activity at the Local and Sub-Regional Level

The Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration includes a proposal that a statutory duty is imposed upon all local authorities to assess their local economies. This report reviews the range of types of economic assessments currently being produced at the local and sub regional level. It also examines the changing forms of sub-regional structures and identifies tensions that need to be addressed in the development of future economic assessments and strategies.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/734561>

Planning and Optimal Geographical Levels for Economic Decision-making: The sub-regional role

This document applies the levels of intervention approach to economic policy areas, with a particular focus on planning, to support understanding of the appropriate role of different government levels. Conclusions, further outlined in the Review of Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration, include the need for further sub-regional involvement in planning policy, with a necessary provision of incentives to encourage sub-regional cooperation on planning issues.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/734552>

Why Place Matters and Implications for the Role of Central, Regional and Local Government

Highlights some of the analysis that fed into and supported a number of recommendations in the review of sub-national economic development and regeneration, including empowering local authorities to promote economic development and neighbourhood renewal. While recognising the benefits of supporting local authorities to work together at the sub-regional level.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/734570>

Publication of DWP research report on in-work support

A qualitative research report on the In-Work Support (IWS) component of the 'Pathways to Work' incapacity benefit reform pilots which provides in-depth accounts of customer and staff experiences is published today by the Department for Work and Pensions. The research forms part of a comprehensive independent evaluation of 'Pathways to Work' which aims to consider the overall impact of the programme, in addition to understanding the different elements and how they affect the employment outcomes of incapacity benefit customers who take part. The main findings are:

- 'Pathways to Work' In-work Support was not the only, or even primary source of support, but formed a helpful part of a jigsaw of support for most customers who use the service (i.e. alongside other Pathways elements and informal support). Customers valued the tailored and flexible nature of the service which meant it could meet a variety of customer needs.
- For customers with mental health issues, low self-confidence and uneven work histories, Pathways IWS was commonly cited as a very, and often the most, important source of support.
- The provision of IWS is an important service for those incapacity benefit customers not registered with a job broker through New Deal for Disabled People. It has an important role in maximising the sustainability of job outcomes achieved through 'Pathways to Work'.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=741327>

New campaign to help hard-working parents prepare their children for university

A new campaign to help hard-working parents get their kids ready for university this autumn is being launched today by Higher Education Minister, Bill Rammell. The Government is providing more financial help than ever before to assist young people from lower and middle income families to aim for university. More and more parents appreciate the opportunities that a degree can bring to their children and that's why the campaign aims to let them know about the additional help on offer. From September this year, one third of all eligible students in England entering higher education are expected to be entitled to a full non-repayable maintenance grant worth £2,835 and another one third are expected to be entitled to a partial grant. <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=741543>

Latest Labour Market Data

This month's figures show an increase in both the number of people in employment and the employment rate. The number of unemployed people, the unemployment rate and the claimant count have all fallen. The inactivity rate and the number of inactive people of working age have both fallen. The number of vacancies has increased. Growth in average earnings excluding bonuses is unchanged but earnings growth including bonuses has fallen. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0308.pdf>

Population Trends 131 - Spring 2008 (27 March)

Very useful Population stats document from ONS with articles on migration, projections and census and lots of detailed stats on demography. Apparently now 45% of marriages end in divorce. You may see this as good news of course... www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=6303&Pos=&ColRank=1&Rank=422

RDPE Tendering Opportunities

The South West of England Regional Development Agency (South West RDA) is pleased to invite expressions of interest from organisations that wish to deliver Grant Administration Services for the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) in the South West Region of England from 1 September 2008. Further details, including how to respond, are set out in the Information Memorandum and Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire:

- [Grant Administration Service Information Memorandum](#)
- [Grant Administration Service Pre-Qualification Questionnaire](#)

The Service is being advertised in the European Official Journal under reference number 2008/S 56-075782. The Contract Notice can be viewed at [UK-Exeter: administration services](#).

ESF Competitiveness and Convergence latest

CFOs get plaques for Convergence.

On 28 March, at the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly joint Convergence Programme Monitoring Committee (PMC) and on 3 April at the Competitiveness and Employment Joint PMC, the GOSW Regional Director and PMC Chair, Jon Bright, presented ESF plaques to representatives from the Learning and Skills Council and DWP to highlight their role in co-financing ESF in the new programme. The LSP and DWP, through Jobcentre Plus, have been awarded an initial allocation of £47 and £16 million respectively for Convergence, and £35 and £17million for Competitiveness to deliver ESF activity during the first half of the programme. For more information see the Convergence section at www.objectiveone.com.

ADAM, the new project and product portal for Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci is part of the European education and training programme "Life-long Learning" and focuses on initial and further vocational education and training. Year after year, Leonardo da Vinci projects develop a multitude of innovative education and training products featuring tailored solutions for direct use in companies and at education and training institutions. <http://www.adam-europe.eu/adam/homepageView.htm>

ESF Case Studies

This section of the website provides case studies of projects that are using ESF to improve participants' skills and job prospects. It also includes booklets on ESF achievements in some of the English regions. The first four case studies are of 2000-2006 ESF projects featured in the new ESF DVD. In each case study there is a link to the video of the project. http://esf.gov.uk/case_studies/index.asp

European cities integrating migrants: From Amsterdam to Zagreb:

Fostering a dialogue about successful policies - EVENT

7 April 2008, Committee of the Regions, 101 Rue Belliard, Brussels

The conference gathers policy-makers at EU- and local level, practitioners and experts to present new research and good practice cases of integration of migrants in Europe's local authorities and cities.

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/events/2008/confclip070408/index.htm>

Age and Demography latest from SWOOP

Research Strengthens Case for Flexible Retirement

Fewer than half of Britons chose the word "happy" to describe how they felt on the first day of retirement, evidence the DWP claim shows that the traditional 'sudden stop' approach no longer works for many people. The research showed that those already working half time said they would miss work if they stopped compared to just over a quarter of full-timers. A CIPD report from January found 38% of 50-64 year olds plan to carry on working beyond 65 compared just over 10% currently working beyond State Pension age. Among those who said they did not plan to work past 65, 31% would change their mind if their employer allowed them to work flexibly highlighting the unsuitability of a one-size fits all default retirement age. <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/pressreleases/2008/apr/emp073-080408.asp>
<http://www.cipd.co.uk/pressoffice/articles/250108PR.htm>

Safety Net?

Fears about online safety are putting off Britain's over 50s, and holding them back from getting to grips with computers and the internet. A new survey from UK online centres has found that 51% of over 50s living in England are concerned about internet safety and personal security. It doesn't tell us what the corresponding figures are for younger groups!

<http://www.ukonlinecentres.com/consumer/content/view/110/162/lang,en/>

Government-backed careers advice is patchy and needs improvement

A team of "mystery shoppers" rated as "inadequate" face-to-face advice given to young people in Connexions centres. They found adult careers services offered by Nextstep to those with few qualifications were usually poor. The Department for Children, Schools and Families acknowledged that careers advice often fell short of what was expected and said changes were ahead. The research was commissioned by educational organisation Edge and the Skills Commission, which looks at how best to improve the nation's skills and has been hearing evidence on the issue for the past six months.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/7318919.stm

Obituary Geoff Ford, Author of 'Am I still needed ?'

Geoff Ford, who has died aged 69, was passionate about the role of career guidance in helping to develop and transform lives. He had a particular concern for disadvantaged people, both young and old. His research was diligent and painstaking; his knowledge of his field was quite encyclopaedic.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2008/mar/31/3>

Alan Denbigh, SWOOP Employer's Project Manager

alan.denbigh@ex.ac.uk

www.swoop-project.org.uk

Conferences and Events

Employability+ Skills Festival

13 & 14 May 2008, National Star College

Employability+ is an innovative, interactive skills festival for both disabled people and employers. It is designed to encourage more disabled people to raise their aspirations and recognise they can and should be contributing to their local economies. It is also for employers to address their own assumptions and fear of the unknown, to become disability confident organisations and recognise the huge benefits to their businesses of employing a diverse workforce. Last year's event, which was the first of its kind, attracted 200 organisations supporting the event and over 1000 visitors over the two days. The event's success is in part due to its interactive nature which allows wider access and engages visitors.

charber@natstar.ac.uk

Dorset Heritage & Cultural Tourism Event

11 April 2008, Kingston Maurward, near Dorchester, Dorset

contact: vbennion@aib.ac.uk

Conferences and Events continued...

Implementing 14-19 Qualification and Curriculum Reform

22 April 2008, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

Innovation Nation: Will the DIUS White Paper Kick Start an Innovation Revolution?

22 April 2008, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

Taking Forward Adult Skills Accounts

30 April 2008, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

The National Evaluation of Sure Start

8 May 2008, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

www.campaignforlearning.org.uk

What do employers want? Employability and skills for a 21st century workforce

12 May 2008, 76 Portland Place, London

www.cesi.org.uk

Employability+ Skills Festival

13 & 14 May 2008, National Star College

Contact: charber@natstar.ac.uk

Schools and Raising the Learning Leaving Age

15 May 2008, Campaign for Learning, 19 Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF

www.campaignforlearning.org.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, Somerset College of Art and Technology

cpateman@bournemouth.ac.uk

"Improving the Odds" Sustaining Employment

22 May 2008, Exeter Racecourse, Kennford, Exeter

<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/15qtEVnzkiClns8>

The BILD Annual Conference: Engagement in Learning

12 June 2008, CBI Conference Centre, London WC1

<https://www.swiftpage5.com/symposium.howard/C080331074900/speasapage.aspx?addr=31>

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