



SLIM-lines

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

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It is likely that this will be the last of the 'SLIM-lines Newsletters' as we are fast approaching the launch of our joint (with RDA, RSP and Competitiveness Programme) e-zine – the South West Skills Newsletter. We are hoping that this will be a fairly 'seamless transition'. The new publication seeks to be attractive, interesting and modern... so just like me then (*no, not at all like you – SLIM Director*). Oh.

If it all goes to plan I should be writing the first South West Skills Newsletter for circulation around the 9th of June... if it doesn't... then expect an 'interim' SLIM-lines, whilst our Partners throw us into the Climey Fisher Memorial Gravel Pits in Frome, and hand the job over to someone more competent...

In the Skills News this week it looks like Chris Humphreys of the new UKCES is preparing to start [axing SSCs](#) as they are all up for re-licensing this year... and Leitch didn't go out of his way to praise many in his recent evidence to Government... In the same report Humphreys emphasises the importance of Employability Skills, which we at SLIM believe is a positive move and something many in the region have been pushing for some time. [Andy](#)

Minister welcomes roll out of 750 new European Social Fund projects to boost jobs and skills

The projects are starting during spring and summer 2008. They are the first to be supported by the 2007-2013 ESF programme which is investing £2 billion of ESF money in England.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=789099>

Survey shows fall in number of adults who learn in the South West

There has been a fall of 2% in the number of adults participating in learning in the South West. That is one of the findings of the annual Adult Learners' Week survey – *Counting the cost* - to be published last week by NIACE. The survey shows the proportion of adults currently learning in the South West, or having done so in the last 3 years, has fallen from 44% in 2007 to 42% in 2008. The survey shows a fall across the United Kingdom from 41% in 2007 to 38% in 2008. <http://www.niace.org.uk/news/current.htm#Survey>

4,000 Sign up to Cabot Circus Jobs

The Bristol Alliance has today revealed that over 4,000 jobseekers have now registered on the Cabot Circus jobs website. Since its launch in late February, the Cabot Circus Jobs website has been inundated with requests from jobseekers vying for a chance to be a part of the scheme when it opens in September.

<http://www.southwestrda.org.uk/news/default.asp>

Launch of Ofqual

In the Government's Draft Legislative Programme, published on Wednesday, they announced that they intend to legislate to establish the regulator as part of an Education and Skills Bill in the 2008-09 session. Ed Balls has published an exchange of letters with Kathleen Tattersall OBE, the chair of Ofqual. Read these at the link below: http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2008_0093

Thought for today

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is the use of a book" thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations?"

Lewis Carroll

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

Further Education, Work-based Learning and Train to Gain: Learning and Skills Council-funded learner outcomes in England 2006-07

- Success rates for LSC-funded provision in FE sector colleges (all ages - 16 plus) have reached a new high point of 78%, up nearly 1.5 times the 1997 figures of 53%.
- In 2006/07, 111,800 LSC-funded learners completed apprenticeships (all ages -16 plus), an increase of nearly two-thirds on the 68,000 completions in 2004/05, and a 3-fold increase since 2001/02.
- In 2006/07 the full framework completion rate for apprenticeships (all ages - 16 plus) was 63%, up from 53% in 2005/06, and an increase of over 20 percentage points since 2004/05 (40%).
- In its first full year, provisional overall success rates for Train to Gain were 60%.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/819338>

Fears of rural digital divide groundless as online access soars

A hunger for online shopping, internet banking, online entertainment and email has given rural Britain the lead in the race to install broadband, with the number of homes with high-speed connections in isolated areas overtaking those in urban areas for the first time. Having lagged behind big cities for years, the countryside is now better connected. Some 59% of households in rural areas have broadband, compared with 57% of urban areas, according to a survey into television, radio, internet and telecoms habits by media watchdog Ofcom. Ofcom said the findings were unexpected, and signalled the end of fears of a "digital divide" between the countryside and built-up areas.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/may/22/internet.digitalmedia>

Agency Workers in the UK to receive equal treatment after 12 weeks' employment.

Temporary and agency workers will receive the same rights as permanent staff after 12 weeks under an agreement between the government, the CBI and the TUC announced. The business secretary, John Hutton, said the deal, which is the culmination of a lengthy dispute between employers and unions, would achieve the government's twin objectives of "flexibility for British employers and fairness for workers". After 12 weeks in work, temporary and agency workers will qualify for the same pro-rata pay and conditions as full-time workers. This reflects a compromise between the unions, who wanted full rights after day one, and the CBI, who wanted equal treatment delayed for six months or a year. But the temporary and agency workers will not qualify for other in-work benefits, like sick pay and pensions, after the 12-week period. The two sides have also agreed that there should be "appropriate anti-avoidance measures" to stop employers evading the regulations, for example by changing an employee's job description before the deadline elapses.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2008/may/20/politicalnews?qusrc=rss&feed=politics>

Extra bank holiday could be on the way

The prospect of an additional bank holiday to celebrate the armed forces has moved a step closer after a parliamentary report on the military was published. Quentin Davies, the MP who led work on the report, said that society had become so "individualistic, hedonistic and materialistic" that it needed to be reacquainted with the virtues of self-sacrifice shown by the UK armed forces.

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/E/R.aspx?U=14806&C=22288113>

Tighter rules for skilled foreign workers

British-based companies will have to prove they cannot fill skilled posts with a resident worker, and will need to prove that the vacancy has been advertised in the UK. Would-be migrants will need a job offer before they even apply for a visa, unless the job is on the shortage occupation list. To qualify to enter the UK to work, skilled foreign nationals will have to earn a certain number of points. These points are awarded only if a person can prove they will be doing skilled work, speak a good standard of English, and are earning more than £24,000, or have a decent qualification. Employers will need a license from the UK Border Agency to offer jobs to skilled workers.

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news/tighter-rules-skilled-work>

LAA's: meeting the challenge of youth crime

With the problem of youth crime once again firmly in the spotlight, this case study looks at the positive work carried out by the 'From Boyhood to Manhood Foundation' in the London Borough of Southwark. The organisation provides young people with access to education and life skills. <http://list.idea-knowledge.gov.uk/t/13187/76704/2139/0/>

New Reports and Publications

Shifting the unequal state: from public apathy to personal capability

"It would seek to transform the UK from a "why bother?" to a "can do" economy by rebalancing the roles of the government and the individual. The tax and benefits system needs to change to incentivise work at all levels. Individuals should be able to attain a level of income that motivates them and enables them to invest in their own capability. Public service delivery should be driven by consumers. Critically, an open education system is required that ends the rigidity between the private and public sectors."

<http://www.reform.co.uk/documents/080415%20Final%20report.pdf>

Refugees in the UK Labour Market

An article in a recent edition of the Journal of Social Policy reports on the labour market activities of refugees in the UK. Drawing on data from a survey of 400 refugees, Alice Bloch of London's City University has found that those with high levels of skills who are working are not in jobs that match their skills and qualifications. She notes that while language fluency and training are very important factors in refugees gaining employment, the difference between men and women is the greatest. *Bloch, A. (2007) 'Refugees in the UK labour market: the conflict between economic integration and policy-led labour market restriction', Journal of Social Policy, 37(1)*

Engaging Small Employers in Continuing Training

A new report developed by the Sector Skills Development Agency examines international experiences of engaging small firms, identifying key schemes that relate to increasing small firm engagement, participation and investment in workforce training. The research included country studies which showed that only a small proportion of policies on continuing vocational training were specifically focused on small firms. The research also noted the importance of the involvement of employee representatives in overcoming barriers to training provision, for both small firms and disadvantaged groups such as low qualified workers.

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/Default.aspx?page=41>

Rates of return on degrees across British regions

Taking the 2000-2004 Labour Force Survey this study looks at the rates of return for degrees across the UK regions – depending upon where the graduate begins employment. It finds very major regional variations in the financial rewards available to graduates, with much higher returns in London and the South East than elsewhere. *IN Regional Studies, Vol 42 No 2 Mar 2008*

LLUK targeted guidance document for work-based learning providers

This is designed to help them understand the reforms to, and demands of, professional qualifications and development for trainers, instructors and tutors. Although not required by law to comply with the regulations in this field (as colleges are), work-based learning providers do have a contractual obligation to comply with the requirements if they receive funding from the LSC. A web-page with more detail about the context is here: <http://www.lifelonglearninguk.org/3466.htm>

The Economics of Migration

This paper sets out a proposal for research to analyse the economic risk to local and rural economies from any sudden disruptions to the supply of migrant labour. This research will address a very real concern based on the emerging evidence that many businesses in rural areas have become increasingly reliant on migrant labour to do the work. <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/theeconomicsofmigration>

Rural Proofing Review

This report summarises the findings of research on the barriers that prevent the rural proofing of policy and delivery taking place, how these barriers can be addressed and how individuals in government departments and other organisations can be supported to undertake rural proofing more effectively.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/documents/publications/780783>

Regional trends 40

Regional Trends offers a comprehensive and revealing insight into the state of the nation, illustrating many aspects of life at a regional and local level. The publication brings together comparative regional data about people and industry, such as the value of our houses, our health, the qualifications we achieve, the amount we earn and the value of the economy. www.statistics.gov.uk/regionaltrends40/

New Reports and Publications continued...

TUC Report on Apprenticeships for Women

A report was launched by the TUC at its Young Members Forum annual conference on 27 March on the current disadvantages facing female apprentices. The report, Still More (Better Paid) Jobs for the Boys, includes findings that show whilst more apprenticeship places have opened up for women in general, this has not happened in better-paid male-dominated sectors such as engineering and construction. The TUC report finds no real improvements in the situation facing women seeking apprenticeships in traditional 'male industries' since the Equal Opportunities Commission reported separately on the issue for the period 2002/03. <http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-14514-f0.cfm>

RDAs need to do more to support innovation - BCC

England's regional development agencies (RDAs) must do more to encourage innovation, according to a report by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC). The report, entitled 'The Ideas Business: The Real Innovation Nation', revealed that 74% of businesses invest in research and development, but just a third are aware of the current regional support available for innovation.

<http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/6798219245601065910/2-2-billion-rda-budget-needs-to-improve-delivery-of-innovation-in-the-region.html>

Migration myths: employment, wages and labour market performance

Discusses the impact of migration on the UK labour market. Argues that there is little evidence to suggest that migration is having a negative impact and that the recent high level of inward migration has, on balance, been a significant advantage for the UK economy. Reviews the international evidence on the impact of migration on wages and employment. Discusses the problems of workless households and suggests that those already detached from the labour market may have been pushed further away from participation as a result of migration. <http://www.theworkfoundation.com/Assets/PDFs/migration.pdf>

Employability skills explored

This report examines the factors that define employability skills and explores how UK employers perceive the current level of skills of young people entering their first job as well as the type of skills they expect from these young workers. It goes on to reveal employer expectations of skills development and their views on the funding of it. <https://www.isneducation.org.uk/user/order.aspx?code=080044>

Northerners are more 'successful' entrepreneurs

Northern entrepreneurs are more 'successful' than their Southern counterparts at creating jobs, even though there are fewer entrepreneurs in Northern England, according to the results of a study. The study, conducted by Hull University Business School, the University of St Andrews and the Cranfield School of Management, rated the success of entrepreneurs on the number of employees they have. It found that self-employed men in the north create an average of 3.53 jobs, and self-employed women in the north create 3.48 jobs. In the South, self-employed men could only manage to create 2.65 jobs, and their female equivalents created 3.08 jobs. The smaller jobs market in the North is thought to be a factor in pushing people into self-employment.

<http://www.smeweb.com/management/news/northerners-more-successful-entrepreneurs-study-finds.html>

Mapping the Creative Economy in the UK

A report produced by innovation think tank Nesta (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) aims to measure the contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy. In order to do this, it singles out which industries and occupations can be defined as creative and notes that not all creative jobs occur in the creative industries. Nesta have developed a model of a 'Creative Trident' of 'specialist' artists, 'support' staff and creative individuals 'embedded' in other industries and these are collectively known as the 'creative workforce'. From this model the following findings have developed:

- The creative economy accounts for over 7% of UK employment, consistent with official estimates
- Creative employment has grown slowly over the long run
- Creative incomes are higher than average

More creative people work outside the creative industries than inside them
http://www.nesta.org.uk/assets/Uploads/pdf/Policy-Briefing/beyond_creative_industries_policy_briefing_NESTA.pdf

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 and the claimant count have increased but the unemployment rate is unchanged. 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 increased. In the latest reference period: the working age employment rate was 74.9%, up 0.1 percentage point on the previous quarter. The number of people in employment increased by 117,000 over the quarter. The unemployment rate was 5.2%, unchanged from the previous quarter. The number of unemployed people increased by 14,000 over the quarter. The claimant count was 806,300, up 7,200 from the previous month. The number of vacancies was 682,800, up 6,700 from the previous quarter. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/lmsuk0508.pdf>

ESF and ERDF Latest

European Qualifications Framework Formally Adopted

The EQF is a common European reference framework which links countries' qualifications systems together, acting as a translation device to make qualifications more readable. It has two principal aims: to promote citizens' mobility between countries and to facilitate their lifelong learning.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

OECD framework for the evaluation of SME and entrepreneurship policies and programmes

This report seeks to be of direct practical assistance to public administrators and politicians concerned with evidence on the effectiveness of SME and entrepreneurship policies and programmes at a national and local level. <http://213.253.134.43/oecd/pdfs/browseit/8507041E.PDF>

New website on the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET)

ECVET is a system developed by the EU Member States and the European Commission to facilitate the recognition of knowledge, skills and competences gained by individuals through periods of vocational education and training abroad. ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/ecvet/index_en.html

In-Service Training: 30 June 2008 deadline

In-Service Training grants enable you to improve teaching, coaching or management skills through attending a structured course, conference or seminar or by undertaking work shadowing in another eligible country. Placements or courses can be from one day to six weeks. The grant awarded will help with the course fee, travel costs and preparation costs. <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/llp/istcoursedatabase>

Three new ESF equality and diversity guidance booklets on gender, age and ethnicity

The new booklets are primarily aimed at ESF Co-financing Organisations and their providers. They will also be of interest to other public bodies, projects and partners involved in developing strategies or delivering services that aim to support diverse communities. The booklets are structured in a similar way to the disability guidance. They follow the main steps that a project would be expected to take when helping someone move from worklessness into sustainable employment.

http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/502262_ESF_ezine_mayjun_AW.pdf

ESF gender equality and equal opportunities mainstreaming plan

The new mainstreaming plan for the 2007–2013 programme is due to be published on the ESF website in June. An article on the mainstreaming plan will appear in the next issue of 'ESF at work'.

http://www.esf.gov.uk/info_for_cfo_and_projects/gender_equality_and_equal_opportunities.asp

Cornwall wins praise for Objective One projects

ESF Objective One projects in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly have won praise from an Ofsted inspector who said it is clear the investment is "really changing peoples' lives." The inspector's report found good success and achievement rates across most projects, with good progress into jobs: "Partnership working is identified as particularly strong in this region which has incredible spin off and benefits for both staff and learners. There is good collaboration amongst partners resulting in a widening of participation."

http://www.esf.gov.uk/docs/502262_ESF_ezine_mayjun_AW.pdf

SWOOP – Age and Demography Latest

Equality bill to encourage positive action

Equalities minister, Barbara Follett, told delegates at a Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development diversity conference in London that the Bill will focus on four main ways of improving the equality of employment rights across all sections of society. It will demand more transparency from employers; make diversity practices more important to winning government contracts; strengthen enforcement of the law; and encourage more positive action, she said. "We are looking at positive action," said Follett. "This is lawful action that helps members of under-represented groups get on level terms. We want to keep the merit principle but increase the number of circumstances in which employers can take positive action."

<http://www.personneltoday.com/articles/2008/05/21/45925/early-peek-at-equality-bill-suggests-positive-steps.html>

Flexible working to help 4.5 million more parents

Business Secretary, John Hutton, accepted the recommendations made by Imelda Walsh, the HR director of Sainsbury's, to extend the right to request flexible working to parents of children up to age 16. The government will now consult on implementation. The review found that:

- Small businesses had a better record on accepting flexible working requests than larger ones.
- Flexible working is not a 'women's issue', with 14 million employees currently working flexibly, and the latest figures showing men make up 45% of this figure.
- 91% of workplaces who received requests in the last year approved them and BERR's Third Work-Life Balance Survey of employers shows they largely have positive views about work-life balance.

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=367522&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=True>

Older workers plug skills shortages

Small business owners are increasingly turning to older workers in plugging the skills gaps according to the Tenon Forum, which reports that a third of small businesses think that graduates and college leavers are not work-ready and lack basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.

<http://www.tenongroup.com/Press/2008/Press080506.asp>

Rewarding all ages; publication

Age discrimination is often unintentionally embedded in organisational practice. One area that may have been overlooked is the reward system. This CIPD report, Managing an Ageing Workforce - The Role of Total Reward, examines how total reward can help attract, retain and engage older workers. Rewards examined include: financial rewards (including pensions), flexible working, and training and development for an ageing workforce.

<http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F9A3D839-2E4B-416C-9F8E-76787E2A4D1C/0/managework.pdf>

Working conditions of an ageing workforce; publication

Four factors are key to shaping the age structure of Europe's workforce according to this report: ensuring career and employment security; maintaining and promoting the health and well-being of workers; developing skills and competencies; and reconciling working and non-working life. The findings show that improving working conditions leads to better job sustainability over the lifecycle, which in turn can prevent early exit from the labour market and encourage stronger participation rates among older workers. The analysis is based on findings from the fourth European Working Conditions Survey carried out in 31 countries, including the 27 EU Member States.

<http://mcsv.net/cgi-bin/redirect?MCid=KkDY7w3jX6YB6pVB8P0C>

Workplace design for older workers; publication

Reports on a survey of workers in four organisations based in food manufacturing, supermarket retail, social care, and the cleaning industry. Intergenerational conflict may be caused when older workers become reliant on younger ones to do more physically demanding tasks; younger workers can feel they 'carry' older workers who earn more than they do, and older workers believe that younger workers are unreliable and less skilled. To some extent these problems can be overcome by better equipment and enhanced workplace design. New approaches to the allocation of work, especially the scheduling of shift work would benefit all workers, not just older workers.

http://www.sparc.ac.uk/media/downloads/executivesummaries/exec_summary_buckle.pdf

Further education colleges given powers to award their own foundation degrees

Further education institutions in England can now apply for powers to award their own Foundation degrees under new regulations that came into force on 1 May. To remain competitive in the global economy, the Government is committed to increasing the proportion of workers with high level skills, from the 31% level already achieved to over 40% by 2020.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=778020>

Radical rethink needed to help mentally ill at work

Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission, called for a 'radical rethink' by employers to unleash the talent of people with mental health conditions in a speech for the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health today (Wed 7 May). He called on employers to "create a workplace which cultivates openness, provides support and promotes mental wellbeing." <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=781735>

Early literacy programmes are working

Children who receive 'Reading Recovery' support through the Every Child a Reader (ECaR) programme are getting higher than average results for their age, research published today by the Institute of Education shows. In the second evaluation of the programme, researchers found that the same children are roughly one year ahead of children in schools where the programme is not available, and able to write twice as many words. The gender gap that is normally noticeable between low achieving boys and girls is not evident in schools where ECaR is available.

<http://www.info4local.gov.uk/filter/?item=789286>

Campaign for Learning Events

Political battleground: still more academies? 29 May 2008

With Sam Freedman, Policy Exchange and Professor John Howson, Education Data Surveys

Meeting the Leitch Agenda for HE, 29 May 2008

With Professor Deian Hopkin, LSBU

The Foundation Learning Tier: the jewel in the crown of 14-19 strategy?, 5 June 2008

With Andrew Lambe, LSC and Dylan White, QCA

Full Time HE Students - Funding Higher Fees, 5 June 2008

With Dr Bahram Bekhradnia, HEPI

Taking forward the statutory right to request adult training, 9 June 2008

Delegates will hear presentations from Mark Corney, Policy Adviser to the Campaign for Learning and Iain Murray, Senior Policy Officer for Learning and Skills at the TUC

This Time its Personal, 10 June 2008

Personalised learning is about tailoring education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to ensure that every pupil achieves and reaches the highest standards possible, notwithstanding their background or circumstances, and right across the spectrum of achievement.

A Golden Opportunity: a lasting learning legacy from the 2012 games, 2 July 2008

Through keynote speeches, interactive debates and real experiences, this event will explore the learning potential of the 2012 Games.

The JWT group: training or no training? 10 July 2008

Further details to be announced.

NFLN Conference, 10 July 2008

Edgbaston Cricket Ground

National Learning Forum on Wellbeing, 2 October 2008

Further details to be announced.

Conferences and Events continued...

ITQ Conference 2008 - The Next Generation

29 May 2008, QEII Conference Centre, Westminster

<http://www.livegroup.co.uk/ITQconference08>

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>

How Colleges can promote Community Cohesion

16 June 2008, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 33 Queen Street, London

This conference will enable participants to learn from authoritative speakers and critically share experiences and solutions from colleagues who work in different parts of the country.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/conferences/community-cohesion.htm>

South West Regional Achievement Dialogue - Skills for Life provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

18 June 2008, Lyngford House Conference Centre, Taunton

www.niace.org.uk/RADMoodle (click on Log in as Guest)

The Guardian 2nd Annual Further Education and Skills Summit 2008

18 June 2008, QEII Conference Centre, London SW1

<http://neilstewart.msgfocus.com/c/1LXtoOCOSQeNrTqa>

This learning life 2

19-21 June 2008, Bristol

www.thislearninglife.org

Welfare to Work Convention 2008

25/26 June 2008, ICC Birmingham

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

Creating Enterprising Colleges - Building enterprise knowledge and skills to unlock talent

1 July 2008, CCT Venues-Smithfield, London EC1

<http://neilstewart.msgfocus.com/c/1ThVPiuzHI1RvR7j>

Mindful employer conference

25 September 2008, Thistle Hotel Exeter

E-mail: info@mindfulemployer.net

Tackling Social Exclusion Through Partnership - Removing The Barriers

22 October 2008, Westminster:

www.insidegovernment.co.uk/other/social_exclusion/

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