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# Working to Deliver the Higher Education that Employers Want - Solutions from Lifelong Learning Network HE/FE Partnerships

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# Context

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## Lifelong Learning Networks and RDA Regional Economic Strategy Delivery Objectives

- 1.6.1 Capacity building to ensure that colleges, universities and other training providers have the skills and capacity to deliver a quality, consistent demand-led service now and in the future – including the ability to deliver **flexible bite-sized modules in the workplace**.
- 1.7.1 Increase the number of higher skilled people in private sector jobs by working with employers to up-skill their workforce **through workforce development and increased take-up of foundation degrees**

# Context

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## Lifelong Learning Networks – WM Regional Commissioning Plan

- Regional Priority 6 (Supporting National Priority 2) - **Developing high level skills within the workforce** to meet the regional productivity challenge
- Develop through the **Lifelong Learning Networks**, HEFCE and Higher Education Institutions appropriate progression pathways and Foundation Degree opportunities that address key areas of critical skill shortage at associate professional and technician level

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## Regional Skills Action Plan

- Providing much clearer **progression pathways between intermediate and higher level skills** through an enhanced local and regional infrastructure of Lifelong Learning Networks

- **Bringing together all FE colleges and HE institutions** to deliver a major expansion of Foundation Degrees and Level 4 work-based programmes through regional brokerage principally Train to Gain

# LLNs

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## The Lifelong Learning Networks

- "Infrastructural support to provide maximum opportunity for vocational learners to progress into, and through, Higher Education in a defined geographical area" – networks of FE colleges and HEIs
- In the West Midlands, Birmingham, Black Country and Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire; Hereford and Worcestershire; Staffs, Shrops, T&W;
- **To contribute to policy and practice in F/HE employer engagement to HE**

# Why LLNs?

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## Overall background, rationale & focus of LLNs

- HEFCE widening participation agenda
- Leading radical changes by ‘incentivising’ employer-led vocational provision
- Developing higher level skills which meet the national/regional productivity challenge
- Focus - **FE/HE partnerships to improve progression for vocational and work-based learners**

# FE Partners

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## HE in FE applies employer – responsive principles

- Quick response times
- Work based learning approaches
- Personal and one-to-one support
- Dedicated staff for employer-led work
- Business managers/infrastructure

# FE provision

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## HE in FE is significant

- Directly funded HE and HE franchise work
- Level 4 and 5 LSC funded – ‘non-prescribed’
- Full cost recovery
- Long history of HNC/HND
- FDs now developed – 1st year delivery
- FD awarding powers?

# Partnership work

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## HE working with FE to deliver for employers

- Walsall College/Aston University – Electrical Power Engineering FD – E-ON, Scottish & Southern
- Close collaboration between company, college & Uni
- Developed & validated in under 6 months
- Part of the programme flexible & delivered on-site
- 136 employees/students on programme in 2 years
- Possibility of work-based honours ‘top-up’

# E-ON UK

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Bob Taylor

# Partnership work

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## HE working with FE to deliver for employers

- Initial partnership between a PCT, college(s) and Aston University, Birmingham City University
- Midlands Health Academy – promoting career progression in NHS via DVD/ Skills Escalator
- MHA - FD Health and Social Care -Heart of Birmingham PCT (HoB PCT) , Matthew Boulton/Sutton Coldfield colleges validated by Aston University
- Extended to include Black Country PCT, colleges/HEI

# Employees' progress

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www.midlandshealthacademy.org.uk

- Radiography – FD - Birmingham City University
- IT Analyst – Heart of Birmingham PCT
- Optometrist – Aston University
- Dental Technician – Matthew Boulton College

# Additional Numbers

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## Case Studies/Use of Additional Student Nos.

- Additionally development funded and additional student numbers (ASN) provision at Aston in LLN's first year
- E.g. the first national FD in Audiology leading to BSc Hearing Sciences via the Hearing Aid Company/Scrivens
- B.A. in Working with Children, Families & Young People – Newman U.C – aligned with E.C.M agenda – supported by public sector employers in B'ham/Sandwell
- Case studies for 2008/09 from BCU, City College B'ham, MBC/Sutton, UCB – see LLN newsletter

# Partnership provision

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## BBC&S LLN 'products'

- 'Raised awareness through employer partnerships so that skills needs of sectors are mirrored by demand' (Business Plan) via **Progession Wk Gps and projects**
- 'HE perceived by employers as relevant and attractive to potential learners within the target groups' **FDs and Honours progs e.g. Aston, Newman UC, BCU, UCB**
- Projects to deliver curriculum solutions to progression for vocational/employed learners e.g. **Jacobs Civil Eng & HNC/FD common framework – Wolves University**

# Employer p'ships

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## Other relevant project activity

- Construction - provision for 30 SME learners on Train to Gain/Level 3 'trials' to enable access to level 4 training
- **LSC-funded Higher Level Skills Broker** posts in all LLNs in WM region – "to increase the delivery of higher level skills within WM through the brokerage service"
- Working with Birmingham LA Economic Dev't Team re Level 4 targets – responsive HE for upskilling employees
- *Fdf* regional Business Ops/Leadership modular provision

# Summary

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## Delivering the HE that employers want

- Not always easy – better to work in partnership
- FE sometimes ‘closer’ to employers than HEIs
- Networks can help but need trust between partners
- Can’t just ‘write courses’ but can be imaginative
- Downturn demands more immediate response
- Context of regional/sub-regional strategies can deliver further funding e.g. HEFCE, RDA, ERDF, *fdf,* WNF

# Further information

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# Any questions

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