



## Welcome to the March 2011 edition of the Sussex Learning Network's newsletter

Many of you will be only too aware that higher education is facing challenging times. As we move into a new landscape, "post-Browne" our HE providers are wrestling with the setting of variable fees, renegotiating their financial support packages for students and rewriting their widening participation strategies to meet the new guidelines from OFFA. All with a backdrop of cuts of around £1 billion from the funding council for 2011-12. Our FE partners face similar challenges. The *Wolf Review* has made a number of strong recommendations with regard to the vocational curriculum as it currently stands and further revisions, as a response, will not be unexpected. Funding cuts for the coming academic year, accompanied by the closure of successful national programmes such as Aimhigher and Connexions, are likely to lead to a reduction in the individual information advice and guidance services and support that young people receive.



As our higher education providers begin to diversify, it becomes increasingly important to continue to work together to ensure our learners, and potential learners, get the very best of support to help them to make informed decisions and to find the kind of higher education that will provide the best fit for their needs.

We are very pleased that, in a time where competition for HE places has never been higher (record numbers again with over 600,000 applicants to UCAS already for 487,000 places in 2011-12) that so many of our SLN partners have signed up to the "Apprenticeship Admissions Pledge". This Pledge, more of which later in the newsletter, is only the second example of its kind signed anywhere in the country. Again, it demonstrates the strong commitment of the SLN partners to promoting and ensuring progression opportunities for vocational learners and their support for the Government agenda of increasing the numbers of apprentices studying and securing appropriate pathways for them to progress to higher education.

Our partners have seen a number of significant staff changes since our last newsletter. We would like to send a warm welcome to Melanie Hunt and Janak Patel who have joined as Principals of Sussex Downs College and Sussex Coast College Hastings respectively. They join Shelagh Legrave who took up the principalship of Chichester College at the beginning of this academic year. We wish them well in their new roles and look forward to continuing to build on the strong relationships we have with each of our College partners. We are sad to have to say goodbye to Liz Gray who retires from her post as Regional Director of the Open University in the South East on 31st May. Liz has been a true friend and strong supporter of the SLN since it first began and we will all miss her greatly. We wish her well and thank her for all that she has done for our project and for the learners of Sussex.

Well, the rest of this newsletter will tell you more about work that the SLN has done and work that is coming up as we approach the Summer. You will find invitations to join us in some of these activities and invitations to tell us more about what you are doing to support vocational learners. We look forward to hearing more about what you are doing out there to support progression. Get in touch and help us to spread the word for you!

**Viki Faulkner**

Sussex Learning Network Director



## Advanced Apprenticeships welcome here

Working with SCTP and Learning Opportunities, SLN and Aimhigher Sussex have produced *Advanced Apprentices Welcome Here!*, an information, advice and guidance leaflet which has been distributed through the SCTP membership and Aimhigher Sussex to apprentices in Sussex. It gives general advice and encouragement to advanced apprentices hoping to progress to higher education. Case studies describe how Sussex apprentices Becca, Jon, Vinnie and Emma made the transition to higher education from advanced apprenticeships in children's care, learning and development; health and social care; engineering; and business and administration.

The document is available as a download from the Centre and Work and Learning's dedicated apprentice pages.

[www.centreforworkandlearning.org.uk/apprentices](http://www.centreforworkandlearning.org.uk/apprentices)

The pages also have links to the latest research and policy; the case studies and progression pathways; the Apprenticeship Admissions Pledge; and a profile of what apprentices are.

According to the National Apprenticeship Service statistics there were 4,320 advanced apprentices enrolled on frameworks in Sussex in 2009-10.

## Apprenticeship admissions pledge

We are delighted to report that nine higher education providers in Sussex have signed the "Apprenticeship Admissions Pledge". The Recognition Statement for the Advanced Apprenticeship Qualification (to give it its proper title) welcomes applications from advanced apprentices, pledges to improve the visibility in marketing materials of the acceptability of apprenticeship qualifications and to work with Sector Skills Councils to explore the possibility of creating higher apprenticeships.

This was felt to be an important commitment for a number of reasons. The recent BIS white paper, [Skills for Sustainable Growth](#) recognised that entry points for many careers were shifting upwards and called upon universities and further education colleges to work together with employers and sector skills councils and professional bodies to provide "clear ladders of progression so employers and apprentices can more easily understand and access higher level skills opportunities" (BIS, Jan 2011).

Very few higher education courses explicitly mention advanced apprenticeships amongst their eligible entry criteria. Most progressing apprentices are likely to be older than 19 when they apply and the flexibility afforded by admissions departments to mature students may not



If you know of a Sussex apprentice who went on to higher education, we would love to publish their story as an inspiration to others. Equally if you are involved in a programme which would accept advanced apprentices but we have left you out of the leaflet, do let us know. Contact Peter Barron, Deputy Director on 01273 641 090 or email [p.barron@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:p.barron@brighton.ac.uk)

The leaflet has been so successful that, if there is enough new material we are considering producing a second, updated edition.

mean that advanced apprentices are excluded. Nevertheless, an explicit reference and welcoming attitude is an important signal to younger learners looking ahead at their options.

Higher apprenticeship frameworks are currently available in Accounting, Contact Centres, Engineering Technology, ICT Professionals and Purchasing and Supply and new ones are in



Russell Strutt, Principal, Central Sussex College, signing the pledge

development for Business, Life Science, Construction (Site Management Pathway), Providing Financial Advice, Food and Drink, Higher Engineering and Optical Retail. Higher apprenticeships will need to conform to the recently published [Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England \(SASE\)](#) which explain that they should be work-based and contain a higher education element as the "technical certificate" of the wider framework.

If you are interested in finding out how to get more engaged with apprenticeships, contact Peter Barron, Deputy Director for more information on 01273 641 090 or email [p.barron@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:p.barron@brighton.ac.uk)



## What is the Centre for Work and Learning?

A key aspect of the CWL's work is trialling new, flexible modes of delivery of work-related higher education. CWL is a partnership of four universities and five colleges across Sussex who are working together to develop and deliver curriculum in response to the needs of local employers.

## CWL student receives FE Sussex Award for Widening Participation in HE

Graham Payton, an IT employee who completed the Centre for Work and Learning (CWL) Cisco Networking Basics course at Sussex Coast College Hastings (SCCH), is to be presented with an FE Sussex Spring Award. He is runner-up for the University of Brighton Award for Widening Participation in Higher Education.

Graham was registered disabled in 2008, meaning he could no longer carry on as a company director and joint shareholder of the multi-million pound IT company he had set up. The Cisco networking course is the first formal qualification he has attempted since. He embarked on this programme to achieve additional points towards a degree, and update his professional qualifications.

Graham said, "I fitted the course in around work and family life. I studied hard at home in between sessions using all the resources."

The course tutor, Joseph Ake at SCCH said, "We aim to accommodate all students who have special needs. Graham performed brilliantly".



"Since I was registered disabled, I have needed to discover new ways of learning," said Graham. "The practical elements of the course and the simulation software aided greatly as it meant I could replay the lesson again at home whenever I wanted to. I have now a renewed sense of self esteem and confidence and the course has re-ignited my passion for IT".

To find out more about Cisco networking at SCCH, contact Sarah Watson, CWL Lead, on 01424 458560 or email [swatson@sussexcoast.ac.uk](mailto:swatson@sussexcoast.ac.uk)

## Learning at Work Day 2011

SLN and CWL are delighted to be supporting Learning at Work Day on Thursday 19 May. The day, which runs as part of Adult



Learners Week, promotes and supports workplace learning events across the country by drawing attention to the importance of workplace learning and skills. This year's theme is "Future Matters", and highlights the importance of learning and development for individuals and organisations when facing change, reaching goals, planning for the future and developing new ways of working and living. If you are involved in Learning at Work Day as a workplace hosting an activity or a learning provider delivering a free taster session in the workplace, please let us know and we will help to publicise it for you.

For more information on the day, go to [www.learningatworkday.com](http://www.learningatworkday.com) and to let us know what you are doing, contact Peter Barron, Deputy Director on 01273 641 090 or email him on [p.barron@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:p.barron@brighton.ac.uk)

## Employer engagement on the waterfront

The Centre for Work and Learning's Director and Deputy Director, Viki Faulkner and



Peter Barron, were privileged to be able to tour the archives of the National Oceanographic Centre (NOC) in the University of Southampton (UoS) recently. The tour was part of a meeting with other HE employer engagement projects from across London and the South East. The NOC will house a new multi-functional space for interaction between students, academics and staff which is part-funded by the University of Southampton's employer engagement project. Discussion ranged around short courses, business development managers, market research, developing deep relationships with employers and accrediting in-house CPD.

To learn more about the UoS employer engagement project, visit the [UoS website](http://www.uos.ac.uk). More details about the NOC Archive can be found at <http://www.noc.soton.ac.uk/nocs/library.php>



## NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF NEWS IN BRIEF

### What does employer demand for HE look like in the Gatwick diamond?



That was the question asked by Nick Rodgers, CWL Lead for the University of Brighton, in his recent study. Nick's project, based in Central Sussex College, gathered information from almost 100 organisations of varying sizes working in a wide range of industrial sectors.

A wide range of opportunities were identified from hire of resources and equipment to test and evaluate products, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships to develop new technologies or exploit new markets, and opportunities to develop new courses at level 4 to meet specific needs.

Other skills identified by business as being in short supply included CAD for product designers, e-commerce expertise for engineers, and leadership and research skills across all sectors. The strongest level of demand for higher education was expressed amongst businesses working in construction, engineering, car and vehicle repair and servicing, estate agency, salon owners, nursing and care homes, charities, horticulture and agricultural industry.

To find out more about the breadth and detail of the study contact Nick Rodgers on 07983 443556 or email [n.rodgers@brighton.ac.uk](mailto:n.rodgers@brighton.ac.uk)

### Sussex Downs College developing 14-16 teaching module

Sussex Downs College is developing a CPD module for lecturers teaching 14-16 year olds in conjunction with the University of Brighton as part of the CWL project. The College has undertaken market research to identify training needs and is in the process of undertaking curriculum development and validation. The module will be worth 20 credits at level 5 and staff will need to hold a teaching qualification. The module aims to provide those involved with the skills, knowledge and understanding to reflect on their own and others' professional practices. It is likely that the course will be delivered in six three hour sessions once every two weeks over a 12 week period in the summer term. Fees are anticipated to be £400.

For more information contact Gill Short, CWL Lead, Sussex Downs College at [gill.short@sussexdowns.ac.uk](mailto:gill.short@sussexdowns.ac.uk)

### Liz Gray, Director of the Open University in the South East, to retire

31 May 2011 sees the retirement of Liz Gray as Regional Director of the Open University in the South East. Liz has been an active SLN Board member, supporter and friend to the Sussex Learning Network since the project began in 2005.

Said Chris Baker, former Director of the Sussex Learning Network, and current Head of Economic and Social Engagement at the University of Brighton:

"From her base at East Grinstead Liz has been responsible for the work of the OU in Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Her many skills and qualities are widely recognised within the organisation but it is in her external role that she has become a familiar face to many of us. The three universities in Sussex, Northbrook College, the University Centre Hastings, Aimhigher and more recently the Sussex Learning Network and Learning Opportunities are all areas that have benefitted from Liz's wise counsel, unerring support and wicked sense of fun. She has managed, often in the face of internal opposition, to sustain the OU as a local provider which is keen to work in partnership with other organisations. Those of us who have worked with her wish her every success in her retirement and thank her for her friendship and encouragement in all that we have done together."

**We would like to wish Liz well in her future endeavours, and thank her for all her work on our behalf.**

