

Focus

Birmingham and Solihull

on the Labour Market

This monthly newsletter provides information and news about labour markets, covering areas such as, employment trends, research and training.

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Welcome

Welcome to the current edition of **FOCUS**, a monthly newsletter covering labour market information and news for the Birmingham and Solihull area.

This newsletter covers many areas such as labour market news, employment figures, and training. Useful information sources and links are also provided.

Who is this newsletter for?

This newsletter will be of interest to any adults wanting or giving advice on learning and work.

If you want to find out about the latest news – turn to page 2

We hope you find it useful and informative

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email please contact helen.walton@connexions-bs.co.uk



Local news

New city mail site to create 120 jobs

Mail specialist DSTi Output is set to create 120 new jobs in the West Midlands with a £20 million-plus investment in a new state-of-the-art production site.

It isn't revealing where it is yet, only saying it is within 20 miles of the MG Rover site in Birmingham.

DSTi Output claims to be the UK's fastest growing onetone transactional mail specialist. Transactional mail is things like bank statements and utility bills.

DSTi Output was created in 2002 when DST International acquired GE Capital's inhouse mailing centre.

The company is the international arm of US-based DST Systems, one of the world's largest software and output companies.

Full article available

Birmingham Post 15th July 2005 (web pages)

Big three left in race for MG

The race for MG Rover is down to the last three contestants from an original field of 630 interested parties.

Full article available

Birmingham Evening Mail 19th July 2005

The Pallasades shopping centre for sale

The Pallasades shopping centre is to be sold to make way for the £350 million redevelopment of Birmingham New Street Station.

The centre owner, The Mall, does not want to be involved in the revamp of the city's main rail hub which sits underneath the shopping complex.

Meanwhile, it also emerged the New Street Station project - creating five times the passenger capacity and a landmark city "gateway" - is in a race against time to be completed before the London Olympics in 2012.

Mr Taylor added the project was not "a done deal" yet and both private and public sector funding was still to be secured. A deputation of Birmingham business leaders will lobby MPs next week about the importance of the New Street scheme
Full article available
Birmingham Post 15th July 2005 (webpages)

Walton £35m homes pledge

West Midlands luxury housebuilder Walton Homes has unveiled ambitious growth plans to increase the number of new homes it builds by over 60 per cent - injecting £35 million into the region's housing market within the next 12 months.

While retaining its stronghold in Staffordshire, the Lichfield-based developer is also spreading its net wider in order to develop larger regeneration sites in the East and West Midlands which meet the Government's guidelines for new housing to be built on brownfield land.
Birmingham Post 25th July 2005

Tesco puts park plans in doubt

Tesco has launched a last-minute bid to scupper plans by developers to transform Shirley town centre with a £100 million makeover.

The supermarket giant has submitted its own ambitious plans to regenerate the busy town centre which would mean that the popular Shirley Park would not have to be built on.

Proposals outlined by developers Shirley Advance were given the green light by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's ruling cabinet last Thursday.

Full article available

Birmingham Post 25th July 2005 (web pages)

Ikea to open Coventry store

Swedish home furnishings giant Ikea is to open a huge superstore in Coventry city centre.

The move was greeted with enthusiasm by city leaders who predicted the cachet of the world's largest furniture retailer would attract shoppers from across the West Midlands.

A singlestorey Co-op foodstore presently occupies much of the land. This will be demolished with the loss of 100 jobs. However, Ikea is promising to create 500 new jobs.

Birmingham Post 6th July 2005 (web pages)

Midlands to share in £40m training pot

A £40 million fund to ensure workers are trained to A-level standard is to be shared between the West Midlands and the North-west.

The multi-million cache comes under a pilot scheme announced by the Government yesterday.

Ministers believe the skills boost will help the region take advantage of opportunities set to emerge from the Olympics coming to Britain in 2012. The funding comes at a time of increasing concern over skills gaps in the UK workforce in the face of growing competition from China and India.

Birmingham Post 14th July 2005 (web pages)

Staffs AWM £57.5m boost

A £57.5 million package of regeneration projects which will create thousands of new jobs in North Staffordshire was yesterday handed over to regional development agency Advantage West Midlands for approval.

The flagship schemes put forward by the North Staffordshire Regeneration Zone (NSRZ) include the £26 million development of the former coalfields at Chatterley Valley into a business park, a £10 million scheme to create a University Quarter in Stoke-on-Trent and a £9.5 million project to create a business district on the site of the soon-to-be demolished Unity House.

The NSRZ, funded by AWM, coordinates the regeneration work of a wide range of local partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Birmingham Post Jul 26 2005 (web pages)

Let the Midlands make the Olympics, say MPs

London will host the Olympics but the Midlands should build it, according to an MP.

The region's skilled workforce could make "a tremendous contribution" towards the 2012 Games, said Pat McFadden (Lab Wolverhampton South East).

He was speaking in the House of Commons, as MPs insisted the event must be used to benefit the entire country.

Birmingham City Council has already begun talks with London Mayor Ken Livingstone on how the city could contribute to the Olympics.

Full article

Birmingham Post 25th July 2005 (web pages)

AWM 'has safeguarded 100,000 jobs'

Advantage West Midlands, the Government body responsible for developing the regional economy, has helped create or safeguard more than 100,000 jobs.

The figures were released yesterday, on the day the Government announced AWM had beaten its targets for the past financial year.

Full article

Birmingham Post 22nd July 2005 (web pages)

Rise in unemployment benefit claimants

The number of people out of work and claiming unemployment benefit rose for the fifth month running in June, official figures showed today.

In a sign of a slight softening of the labour market, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said the claimant count had risen by 8,800 to 864,900 following an increase of 14,000 in May.

The five successive monthly increases in the claimant count is the longest such sequence since the 1992 recession. Over the past year, the claimant count rate has remained virtually unchanged at 2.8%, despite the latest increases.

Wednesday 13th July 2005 Guardian web pages

Retirement warning for ageing employees

Employees will in future get six months warning of any move to force them to retire under new proposals from the Government.

Under current legislation, companies can decide that someone is too old for their job at any age.

But under measures due to come into force by October 1 next year as part of the European Employment Directive, they will have to make a good business case for retiring someone under 65, give six months notice and consider requests to keep working.

Birmingham Post 15th July 2005 (web pages)

There is an increased demand for staff with ICT skills, according to e-skills UK.

The upturn in the ICT labour market continued during the final quarter of 2004 with increased demand for ICT staff, according to quarterly data from e-skills UK. Demand for permanent staff was up 123 per cent on the previous year. Employers appeared to have little difficulty sourcing the staff they needed as fewer than two per cent reported ICT related recruitment difficulties. Advertised salaries were down on the previous quarter.

E-skills UK publishes quarterly report on the IT labour market. Read E-skills UK ICT Inquiry issue 2, e-skills UK, 2005, at <http://www.e-skills.com>
Skills and Education Network Newsletter
July 2005

Other news

UK NARIC now on offer

The UK NARIC database is used to benchmark qualifications from all over the world by translating the academic levels of overseas qualifications into UK Standards.

This database includes:

- Qualification assessments for over 180 countries
- Extensive background to each country's education system
- Education system charts for each country
- Information on Immigration and work permits

If you want to know more about how you can obtain this resource please visit the UK NARIC page for further details. This article and UK NARIC page accessed through www.learndirect-advice.co.uk.

Policy Developments

Draft Age Regulations

The Third Age Employment network newsletter noted that the draft regulations on age discrimination alongside the consultation document, *Coming of Age*, appeared on the 14th July.

Some of the issues which will matter for employers and employees were highlighted in the article - the definition of exemptions, service related pay and benefits, employment rights after age 65 and age-based insurance policies.

The *Coming of Age* and the draft Regulations are available from: www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/age.htm.

Third Age Employment Network
Newsletter, Summer 2005

Word Puzzle

T	R	R	E	T	I	R	W	F	L	O	L	C	C	U
O	Y	O	L	O	L	I	I	R	E	T	N	I	R	P
K	C	O	E	I	B	T	H	E	D	Y	F	N	P	H
R	M	U	C	I	B	O	N	B	K	P	J	A	L	O
E	O	B	T	C	N	R	Q	W	R	I	R	H	T	L
C	M	I	R	P	B	N	A	O	E	S	Y	C	U	S
N	H	N	I	B	C	E	R	R	N	T	T	E	Y	T
A	R	V	C	R	H	U	B	M	I	P	O	M	I	E
D	D	R	I	V	E	R	G	H	O	A	E	R	L	R
D	L	E	A	E	M	R	N	U	J	R	E	O	T	E
F	A	N	N	Z	I	H	N	P	P	E	L	T	S	R
T	W	N	A	B	S	F	A	H	K	K	N	O	I	U
E	Y	A	N	N	T	B	A	K	E	R	J	M	T	Q
A	E	L	B	R	T	T	S	I	R	O	L	F	N	R
C	R	P	A	S	S	R	T	A	N	W	Q	Y	E	R
H	C	N	D	F	G	R	T	J	R	H	I	S	D	L
E	L	W	P	O	F	Y	Y	U	M	T	R	M	I	L
R	M	O	A	E	S	D	S	K	Y	U	I	N	R	E
R	M	T	H	T	V	F	D	Z	N	O	H	S	O	P
A	C	C	O	U	N	T	A	N	T	Y	B	T	T	A

There are 20 different occupations hidden in this puzzle. Can you find them all?

Hint: The words can be spelt horizontally, vertically or diagonally and can be in any direction. The occupation 'Youth Worker' is highlighted on the puzzle for you.

Answers can be found on page 9.

Labour market

Raising sector skill levels: how responsive is local training supply?

This report presents the findings of a study which explored sector skills upgrading needs among employers and the capacity of local vocational and educational training in England to meet those needs. The report concentrates on four sectors (maintenance and repair of motor vehicles; telecommunications services; mechanical engineering, vehicles and other engineering; textiles, clothing and footwear manufacture) in eight regions.

The research found that skill upgrading needs could be met by short course provision by local colleges or training providers but that only a minority of employers in each sector expected to call on their services.

There were also a number of barriers preventing local training providers from running short training courses for local employers, namely concerning whether employers (especially SME's) could put forward a sufficient number of trainees to justify efforts in developing courses and whether they would be able to pay the full costs of training.

The study's findings have important implications for Sector Skills Councils many of whom are presently engaged in drawing up Sector Skills Agreements. The report presents a strong case for more studies to be conducted in other sectors and regions in order to establish the nature of upgrading skills required. This information could then be used in developing Sector Skills Agreements and Sector Skills Council's could use this data to negotiate with their LSC for resources to be made available for short courses designed to meet the training needs of local employers.

SSDA Research Report 9

Intelligence Newsletter July 2005 Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA

Labour Market Barriers

This article in Third Age Employment Network Newsletter detailed research conducted at Napier University's Employment Research Institute which examined the attitudes of job-seekers to 'McJobs'. These are defined in Generation X(Coupland) as low pay, low prestige, low benefit, no future job in the service sector. The researchers suggest that the ways forward include a strong focus on services-orientated training for job-seekers and more convincing evidence from employers of development potential from entry level jobs.

The same article also noted that the CIPD's Annual Recruitment, Retention and Turnover Survey showed that 85% of firms had experienced difficulties recruiting staff over past year. The category of vacancy causing the biggest recruitment headache for employers was 'management and professional' vacancies.

Full article available

Third Age Employment Network Newsletter, Summer 2005

Other research

Survey on adult participation in learning 2005: better news this time?

This survey by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) continues the series documenting adult participation in learning, using the responses of around 5,000 adults in the UK. The figures reveal there is a marked increase in the proportion of adults reporting current and recent participation in learning, reversing the decline reported in the last four years.

However, given the demographic context facing the UK, the 2005 findings should be seen as a cause for concern. The diminishing cohorts of young people will only fill one in three of the vacancies for new and replacement jobs of the next decade. The other places will need to be filled by people currently outside the labour force, and by older people taking on new roles. On the evidence of this survey, these groups are least likely to participate in adult learning.

Intelligence Newsletter July 2005 Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA

Events

Careers with children event

This 'Working with children' event gives an update on the routes, opportunities and changes for these careers, especially those with the 0-11 age group.' It also includes an update on routes and opportunities for adults.

The event is to be held on Thursday 20th October (times to be confirmed) and is open to all network members who are giving careers advice to adults, **maximum of one person per organisation**. Please contact us if you would like to attend and also if there are any specific questions you would like answered.

For more information or to request a place on the course, contact **Mehmuda Patel**, nextstep Administration Assistant on **0121 248 8073**.

Newsletter sources and miscellaneous items

Miscellaneous items

Word Puzzle: Find the occupation answers

1 Motor Mechanic	8 Nurse	15 Librarian
2 Writer	9 Upholsterer	16 Baker
3 Electricians	10 Dentist	17 Teacher
4 Printer	11 Chemist	18 Accountant
5 Artist	12 Chef	19 Florist
6 Driver	13 Lawyer	20 Typist
7 Dancer	14 Town Planner	

Sources

The following information sources were used to put together this newsletter:

News Headlines from Birmingham City Council – accessed via www.birmingham.gov.uk

Skills and Education Network Newsletter July 2005

BBC News Education webpages website

NOMIS (National On-line Manpower Information System) www.nomisweb.co.uk

'Intelligence' Newsletter July 2005 Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA

'Involve' Newsletter July 2005 editions Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA

icsolihull.icnetwork.co.uk (in association with Solihull News and Solihull Times)

Birmingham Evening news; <http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/mail/news>

Birmingham Post; <http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/business>

The Guardian website; <http://www.guardian.co.uk>

Advice-resources website, <http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk/nrs/>

Equal Opportunities website, www.eoc.org.uk

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Whilst we hope you find the contents of this newsletter interesting and informative, the contents are for general information purposes only and do not constitute advice. We believe the contents to be true and accurate as at the date of writing. **nextstep** cannot accept responsibility for the accuracy of the sources.

