

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 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

Region to be at the centre of greener car project

Ford announced that it was planning to invest £1bn in Britain over the next six years to develop greener cars.

The West Midlands' region is set to be at the centre of research and development into greener cars under the multi-million pound plans.

Retailers sign up to the new Fort Dunlop site

Retailers have been rushing to take up lettings in Birmingham's Fort Dunlop scheme.

The landmark building has been redeveloped as a business park under one roof and is due to open this year.

Birmingham's service sector is on the up

The Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCI) quarterly economic survey indicated that the service sector in Birmingham is flourishing. Birmingham saw the largest per cent (49%) of service sector companies reporting an increase in sales (home sales), outside London.

The reported also showed that the performance of Birmingham's manufacturing sector was steady.

[The findings were for the second quarter of the year]

Three local stations to receive funding

Solihull, Shirley and Dorridge stations are to receive support such as upgraded customer information screens and automatic public address systems. This funding has been allocated following a bid from Centro-PTA who is the West Midlands' public transport body. The funding has been allocated to 104 stations across the UK.

Also, Centro-PTA councillors have already vowed to provide £1.2 million for passenger real time information at the stations.

Birmingham targeted for action

In a recent unemployment league table of constituencies, Ladywood, Sparkbrook and Hodge Hill was placed in the top four for unemployment.

A series of initiatives is now planned by the Department of Work and Pensions, with the Government repeating it was resolved to reduce the jobless figures.

Developments

New Developments in Birmingham's Irish Quarter

The Regeneration of Birmingham's Irish quarter has started with around 2,000 units planned for developments around Bradford Street.

Birmingham Post 14th July 2006 (webpages)

Construction consultants appointed to oversee Birmingham New Street station revamp

The redevelopment of Birmingham's New Street Station will be overseen by construction consultants Turner & Townsend.

The firm will work to deliver a new vision for the station and surrounding land. Turner & Townsend will work with Network Rail, Birmingham City Council and Advantage West Midlands on the new vision.

Birmingham Post 11th July 2006 (webpages)

National news

Unemployment

The employment rate remains steady while the unemployment rate continues to increase.

The number of people claiming Unemployment Benefit was up on the previous quarter. The claimant count in July 2006 stood at 957,000.

[Previous quarter - 3 months to June 2006]

The bakery chain Greggs announces job cuts

Greggs, the bakery chain, announced 200 job cuts with the closure of 14 Bakers Oven shops in northern England.

The firm plans to transfer 49 of the 63 Bakers Oven shops to its divisions in the north-east, Yorkshire and Scotland.

Construction orders on the up

According to new figures from the DTI, construction orders in the UK rose in the 12 months to June.

Two British Sugar refineries set to close

British Sugar is to shut two refineries in the UK, York and Allscott and Shropshire, with the potential loss of 200 jobs.

EU quotas are being blamed for the York closures.

Barclays job cuts

Barclays, is revamping its high-street operations with all Woolwich branches being rebranded as Barclays. 1,200 jobs losses are anticipated as part of the revamp.

The closure of offices in Bexleyheath (Kent), Clacton in Essex and Dudley in the West Midlands are expected.

About the Transport and Logistics Sector and word puzzle

About the transport and logistics sector

This sector is concerned with the movement of goods, services and people. It is about getting the right goods and services to the right people, on time and at cost.

Transport isn't just about road transport, it also covers air, sea, waterway (e.g. canal) and rail transport.

Transport and logistics is a key sector for the UK's economy. It is the 5th largest industry in the UK, employing around 1.7 million people in the UK. Transport and communication has growth strongly in recent years in the West Midlands. Solihull accounts for three quarters of air transport employment, reflecting the location of Birmingham International Airport.

Careers

There are many careers opportunities available within the transport and logistics sector at a variety of different levels.

Skills shortages

There is currently a major shortage of LGV Drivers, as well as graduate engineers, junior and middle management and qualified transport planners throughout the sector.

Women are also under represented in the transport and logistics sector with our region.

Word Puzzle

The following words associated with working in the transport and logistics sector are hidden in the puzzle.

1. Road (highlighted on the puzzle)
2. Taxi
3. Congestion
4. Bicycle
5. Freight
6. Rail
7. Port
8. Sea
9. Car
10. Passenger
11. Coach
12. Driver

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

Solve the clues and find the word in the puzzle

13. You can catch this by waiting at a stop. It usually has a top deck (3 letters).
14. Passengers use this craft to travel across the sea. You can take a car onboard (5 letters)
15. A transport system found below ground level. London has the oldest one in the world. Birmingham and Solihull don't have one (11 letters)

Can you find them all? *Answers can be found on page 9*

Policy Developments

European Commission launches health and safety in the workplace campaign.

The European Commission has recently launched an occupational health and safety campaign called Safe Start. The campaign aims to raise awareness of health and safety issues in order to cut down on the number of young people injured in the workplace.

For more information go to the European Week for Safety and Health at Work website, provided by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work <http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/about>

Research and Publications

Employer's needs

National Employers Skills Survey (NESS) 2005

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has published its key findings document of the National Employers Skills Survey (NESS) 2005, which is the third in the NESS series. Detailed findings from the survey are provided in the main report, which will be available from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

NESS provides information relating to recruitment difficulties, skill gaps, recruitment of young people, and training and workforce development. It is undertaken by the LSC in partnership with the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) and the Department for Education and Skills.

The headline findings from the key findings document for 2005 indicate:

- There has been very little change in the incidence of recruitment difficulties and, in particular, in skills-related recruitment difficulties in comparison to the previous year's figures (2004).
- There has been a decrease in the proportion of employers reporting skills gaps in their workforce over the last 12 months to 16 per cent in 2005.
- 65 per cent of employers had funded or arranged training or development for their employees in the previous 12 months. This is a similar figure to 2004, but an increase on the 59 per cent in 2003.
- Variations exist in skills gaps, shortages and workforce development across sectors and regions.

Employers want tailored training

Employers' perspectives on improving skills for employment

More than a third of employers have not trained their staff in the past year, according to this report. Employers are more likely to engage in training that improves productivity and is tailored to suit their needs. This might mean arranging training on site or to fit around shifts. As well as fitting training around working patterns, colleges and training providers must be prepared to be flexible and work with other providers. For example, some courses for people with learning difficulties and disabilities have been closed because they are relatively expensive to run. By sharing costs and pooling resources, providers may well find that these courses become cost effective.

Read Employers' perspectives on improving skills for employment, Committee of Public Accounts, 2006, at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk>
Skills and Education Network, July 2006

Learners' needs

'Skilling Me Softly', a report commissioned by NIACE as part of Adult Learners' Week

More workers find learning on the job helps their performance rather than attending training courses, according to a survey - commissioned by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) - for this year's Learning at Work Day (25th May 2006) as part of Adult Learners' Week.

The report - Skilling Me Softly - found that 77% of workers find doing the job to be the most effective means of improving performance. Nearly three-fifths (59%) of those surveyed find that hands-on learning - being shown by colleagues, watching and listening - to be just as useful.

Yet despite government emphasis on qualifications, only 57% of employees had found attendance on training courses to be very or quite helpful. One in five (21%) reported that training courses had been of little or no help whatsoever. 27% of employees reported that the skills they had developed while studying for a qualification were also of little or no help.

The report also found evidence of gender differences in attitudes to improved performance at work with women more open than men to almost all the forms of learning analysed. Age has a significant impact, too, with the youngest and oldest cohorts surveyed expressing more scepticism as to the value of learning as acquisition. Courses work best for people in their thirties and forties. The Internet as a learning tool, has yet to reach the bulk of British workplaces with only 1 in 3 workers (33%) saying it is very or quite helpful and nearly half (46%) saying it is of little or no help whatsoever.

NIACE Press Release 25th May 2006 (extract). Full details be found on the NIACE website www.niace.org.uk

New flexible training scheme

The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board has launched a new flexible training scheme called TECSkills (Training in Engineering Construction Skills). The scheme aims to make training more accessible to new starters and existing employees, developing their skills and knowledge.

<http://www.ecitb.org.uk>

Skills and Education Network, June 2006

Labour market

Survey of the Audio Visual Industries' Workforce 2005

A survey of the Audio Visual Industries' Workforce, conducted by Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the audio visual industries indicated that despite the existing high levels of qualification among the workforce (more than 2/3rd of people working in the media have a degree), there is a need for significant training in order to meet the skills demands of an industry characterised by change. Two thirds of respondents (62%) reported a training need, mainly to keep up to date with or improve current work (60%) and to develop new technical skills (49%).

The full report is available through the Skillset website, www.skillset.org

Note: The audio visual industries comprise: Broadcast; Independent Production; Facilities (including post production, digital special effects and studio equipment hire); Film (including production, facilities, exhibition and distribution); Interactive media (including web and internet and offline multimedia); Computer games; Corporate production; Commercials; Animation; Transmission; Photo imaging.

"People in Low-paid Informal Work: 'Need not Greed"

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has recently published a report, entitled "People in Low-paid Informal Work: 'Need not Greed". This report explores the experience of people on low incomes, in informal paid work, including those working cash-in-hand and those undertaking undeclared work while claiming benefit. The report also examines current government policy on low-paid informal work and makes a series of recommendations.

For more details go to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) website www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop

Equal Opportunities and gender

EOC investigation: Changing the way we work

An article in the June 2006 issues of EOC E-news reported on a new EOC investigation looking at transforming the workplace of today into a workplace for the future.

The article stated that 'we need to break down existing workplace rigidities and transform the outdated models of work that are failing to meet anyone's needs. Real flexibility and believable choices for individuals and employers is the goal for this exiting new investigation. We are looking for employer's views on any imaginative and practical ways they use to meet the changing demands of the 21st century workplace. More information can be found on the transformation of work pages under the policy and campaign section on the EOC website, www.eoc.org.uk

Gender gap closing

According to this Statistical First Release, the gender gap in learner successes is getting smaller in Further Education (FE). However, women still have higher success rates than men. Overall, numbers of learner successes in FE continue to rise. Work-based learning shows a different picture: success rates across five types of Apprenticeships at level 2 show that male and female learners do equally well. When analysed separately, women do slightly better than men in Apprenticeships at level 2, whereas men do better in Advanced Apprenticeships. Reasons for these differences are complex. Issues such as role stereotyping, individual determination and motivation in minority gender groups all play a part.

Read: Further education and work-based learning for young people: learner outcomes in England 2004/2005, LSC, April 2006, at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk>
Skills and Education Network, June 2006

Training important for women returners

This research, conducted by the Institute of Work Psychology (IWP), reveals that for women returning to work, training is important. Women are particularly concerned about receiving adequate training for a new job. They, and employers, strongly believe there is a need for funded government / employer training programmes to ensure adequate retraining that fits in with childcare responsibilities. Women also feel that the Government should provide free pre-employment skills training for women

returners. Employers agree. This information is based on a survey of 280 'women returners' and 40 consultations with employers and their representatives.

Read Encouraging an increase in the employment of women returners in areas of skill shortage in traditionally male industries, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), March 2006, at <http://www.dti.gov.uk>

Skills and Education Network, July 2006

Newsletter sources and miscellaneous

Miscellaneous items

Answers: 1. Road; 2. Taxi; 3. Congestion; 4. Bicycle; 5. Freight; 6. Rail; 7. Port; 8. Sea; 9. Car; 10. Passenger; 11. Coach; 12. Driver; 13. Bus; 14. Ferry; 15. Underground.

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

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 2006, Learning and Skills Council

Skills and Education Network Newsletter June 2006, Learning and Skills Council

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

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications/news.cfm?page=0&id=101>

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

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

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

Forward Newspaper, Birmingham City Council <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk>

Intelligence Newsletter July 2006 Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)

NIACE website, www.niace.org.uk

Joseph Rountree Foundation (JRF) website, www.jrf.org.uk

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