

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

Production saved at Carmichael

Production at the 150-year old Worcester fire engine manufacturer Carmichael has been saved just days before it was due to be outsourced to the Far East.

The end of production would have led to the loss of around 30 jobs at its factory in Weir-Lane, although research and development and back office functions would have been retained in the UK.

Rising costs were blamed for the switch to the Kuala Lumpur factory of Pesaka Astana, which bought Carmichael last November.

Birmingham Post, 1st December 2005
(webpages)

Exel opens new office in Coventry

The multi-national logistics group, Exel, is expanding.

Exel, who employs more than 100,000 people worldwide, has opened a new office at the 2020 Middlemarch Business Park, Coventry.

21 staff will be based at the site in the firm's environmental compliance department.

Full article available

Birmingham Post, 23rd November 2005
(webpages)

Birmingham-based IT services group wins massive contract

Birmingham-based IT services group SCC has won a massive contract with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

HMRC, created by the April merger of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, is the third largest IT user of all Government sectors after the Ministry of Defence and Works & Pensions.

The four year deal is potentially worth up to £560 million and will initially create 50 new jobs. The contract involves the delivery of supply chain management services across the entire technology infrastructure.
Birmingham Post, 23rd November 2005
(webpages)

Solihull Positive Futures Programme

The Solihull Positive Futures Programme, which aims to provide better opportunities for disadvantaged young people, has given assistance to nearly 800 young people since it began nearly four years ago.

The project has provided young people with access to sports activities, and seen 76 youngsters achieve special success and gain recognition through a variety of other schemes, including the Duke of Edinburgh award and level one coaching in both ice hockey and basketball.

icsolihull.icnetwork.co.uk, 25th November 2005
Birmingham Post 29th November 2005
(webpages)

Jobs boost at Bervin

A Wolverhampton toolmaker, Bervin Tool and Die, is bucking the negative trend surrounding the sector by landing up to £1 million of new work. Bervin has beaten off foreign competition to secure a host of orders.

Bervin which employs 35 people at its Crown Street site, now has plans in place to more than double its current 20,000 sq ft site and recruit an additional 25 people during the next six months.

Over the course of the last year, the company has implemented a number of new processes and manufacturing techniques, resulting in turnover increasing by nearly 50 per cent to £3 million. Birmingham Post, 3rd November 2005 (webpages)

Container base to be sold

A landmark Perry Barr container base, which includes offices, logistics companies, café, and a taxi firm, is to close in March.

The 20-acre site will be sold off for redevelopment. However, the site's current owners Scandinavian shipping giant Maersk are set to relocate its operations and jobs to Tamworth.

Full article

Birmingham Post, 18th November 2005

TIC and NTI offer Advanced Digital Training

This article reported that UCE Birmingham's Technology Innovation Centre (TIC) and Birmingham and Solihull's New Technology Institute (NTI) have teamed up to offer advanced training as a result of increasing demand for screen-based media skills.

The first Authorised Apple Training Centre (AATC) in the Midlands will open its doors in January next year at NTI's new central Birmingham HQ, using the latest Apple equipment, and run by TIC's training staff from the adjacent Millennium Point campus.

It will offer two to five day courses for both professional, and keen amateur, digital programme producers. Producers will gain valuable expertise in preparing digital material and certificates will be awarded on satisfactory completion of the courses. Birmingham Post, 8th November 2005 (webpages)

Labour market statistics, October 2005

This month's figures show increases in the number of people in employment and the employment rate. The working age employment rate was up 0.1 percentage point from the previous quarter. The number of unemployed people has fallen but the rate is unchanged. The claimant count has increased and the number of job vacancies has fallen. Growth in average earnings, both excluding and including bonuses, is unchanged.

Read Labour market statistics: October 2005, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2005, at statistics.gov.uk
Skills and Education Network Newsletter Review, November 2005

The pay gap between men and women slowly narrows

The pay gap between men and women is narrowing but at a gradual rate. At the current rate of progress it would take decades to close the earnings gap.

Recent evidence from the Office of National Statistics suggests that the average man in a full-time job still earns about £100 a week more than the average woman.

Policy Developments

Lisbon Strategy for Jobs and Growth: UK

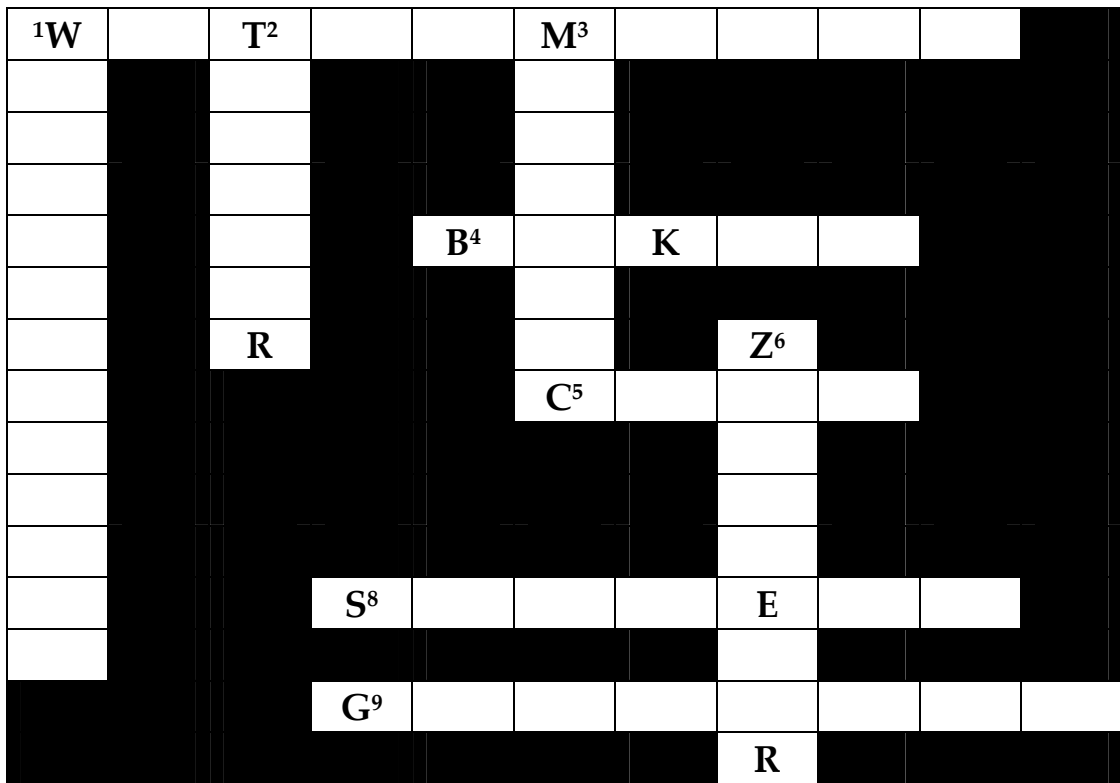
This article from *Intelligence*, SSDA reported on the National Reform Programme.

The article noted that in March 2005 the European Council agreed to re-launch the Lisbon agenda to focus it more sharply on the key priorities of jobs and growth.

Subsequently, the Integrated Guidelines package, endorsed by the European Council in June 2005, identified the key challenges facing the EU as a whole. Member States were then invited to identify their own reform priorities and present forward-looking reform plans to the European Commission by 15th October 2005.

Hence, the UK's first National Reform Programme was published on 13th October. It sets out the challenges currently facing the UK economy, and details the Government's forward looking agenda of economic reforms to ensure macroeconomic stability, to deliver higher productivity growth and to increase employment opportunity for all. Article from Issue 39: November 2005, *Intelligence*, SSDA.

Occupations Crossword



Across

1. Makes, repair and tests watches (5, 5)
4. Prepares and bakes dough, pastry, cakes and other mixtures (4)
5. Plans and prepares meal (5)
8. Diagnoses conditions and administers surgery (7)
9. Prunes and cultivates trees, shrubs and flowers (8)

Down

1. Washes and polishes windows (6, 7)
2. Educates children, usually in a classroom setting (7)
3. Repairs motor vehicles (8)
4. Cares for animals in zoos (3, 6)

Answers can be found on page 8

Labour market

Sectoral productivity differences across the UK

This report noted that from 1992 to 2002 the East, South East regions and London have had consistently higher labour productivity than the rest of the UK. It also points out that labour productivity differs much more between sectors than between countries and regions. For instance, the utilities sector stands out in having productivity five times the national average. In contrast, the hotels and catering sector had productivity which was only 38 per cent of the national average in 2002. Other retail distribution also has very low labour productivity. This research was commissioned to shed light on what is driving national productivity and in particular what might explain the gap between the UK and some of our international competitors. Read Sectoral productivity differences across the UK, Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA), 2005, at

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

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, November 2005

What employers want?

This article refers to a survey report, on 40 CoVEs in five skills sectors, from the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) have made good progress in identifying the skills that employers need most, according to this survey report. CoVEs have also improved their arrangements for consulting employers when planning provision, particularly in engineering, construction and care. Many have also set up good regional networks and share expertise well. The report recommends that greater priority should be given to sharing good practice within each centre's host institution. It also says that centres should continue to promote full-cost bespoke provision for employers and concentrate on recruiting employers who have not previously made use of such training. Read A survey report on 40 CoVEs in five skills sectors: Centres of Vocational Excellence in practice, Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), 2005, at

<http://www.ali.gov.uk>

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, November 2005

Learners needs

Finding ways to encourage learners to take up Level 2 qualifications

This research, entitled *'Modelling progress towards the Level 2 target'*, suggests that people who lack Level 2 qualifications are generally spread across the working population. However the two most significant groups are women aged 25-50 who have some GCSEs, working in skilled occupations and white, unskilled males with GCSEs below grade C. The report argues that most of the progress towards the Level 2 target is likely to come from adults who already have some GCSEs, people from skilled occupations, and younger men. It also says that a large number of those aged 18 and over are more likely to aim for higher qualification than Level 2. Since the willingness to get extra qualifications appears to decline with age, the report suggests that policy developers might wish to explore what people in older age groups are seeking to achieve by participating in learning.

Read Modelling progress towards the Level 2 target, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), 2005, at

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

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, November 2005

Flexible and part-time working practices in the UK

The Equal Opportunities Commission conducted a report into whether gender inequality or discrimination exists in flexible and part-time working practices in the UK. The report discusses the changes in society as well as outlining the current limitations in flexible and part-time working. An ideal vision of flexible working and the benefits to employers, employees and the economy is also described in the report.

Full details are available through Issue 39: November 2005, Intelligence, Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

Promoting adult learning

An article in the Intelligence newsletter reported on a publication entitled 'Promoting adult learning', from OECD. This report provides policy guidance on improving adults' participation in learning, bringing together key lessons from 17 OECD countries. The publication addresses potential barriers to learning and the policies to remedy them, including policies for increasing and promoting the benefits of adult learning to make them transparent and easily recognised. It looks at economic incentives and co-financing mechanisms that can raise the efficiency of adult learning provision, and delivering quality learning that is adapted to adults' needs.

Full details are available in Issue 39: November 2005, Intelligence, Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

Other

VCS Learning Links launched

NIACE has launched an online directory to support learning in the voluntary and community sector. The directory contains details of voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations and networks across England that support learning and training.

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

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, November 2005

Newsletter sources and miscellaneous items

Miscellaneous items

Answers:

Across - 1. Watch Maker; 4. Cook; 5. Baker; 8. Surgeon; 9. Gardener

Down - 1. Window cleaner; 2. Teacher 3. Mechanic 4. Zoo Keeper

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 November 2005

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 November 2005 Sector Skills Development Agency SSDA

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, November 2005

Disclaimer

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