

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

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Local news

Company news

Recycling companies to merge

Kappa Packaging is to merge with Jefferson Smurfit to form the largest packaging company in Europe. Both companies are major recyclers of waste cardboard Kappa Packaging owns the UK's most modern container board plant located in Birmingham.

More information can be found at:
Birmingham Post, 15th Dec 2005 (webpages)

New jobs to be created at BT Openreach

BT's Openreach, a subsidiary of the telecommunications giant BT, could create up to 250 local jobs across the Midlands with up to 1,400 extra staff created nationally.

The jobs will be mainly for service engineers to install and maintain telephone and internet services.

Birmingham Post, 16th November 2005
(webpages)

Airport announces new direct flight to Poland

Birmingham's first scheduled service to Poland has been announced by Birmingham International Airport. Low-cost carrier SkyEurope Airlines will fly direct to Krakow, with flights departing each Wednesday and Saturday from Birmingham International Airport.

Krakow is Poland's fourth largest city and lies in the southeast of Poland. With one of the best-preserved medieval city centers in Europe, it is said to have become a hotspot for tourists visiting this part of Europe.
Birmingham Post, 15th December 2005 (webpages)

SEGA comes to Solihull

SEGA has launched a new games development centre at the Blythe Valley Business Park site in Solihull, The centre, called the SEGA Driving Studio, will concentrate on games for the new generation of consoles, including the new Xbox 360 and aims to develop driving and racing games for the European and American markets.

Between £20-30 million will be invested in the Blythe Valley Business Park site over the next three years, creating 80 jobs within the next 12 months.

Birmingham Post, 16th November 2005 (webpages)

Midlands on course to beat last year's jobs total

The number of jobs created from inward investment this year is on course to beat the record in the Midlands, set last year. Figures show that more than 1,000 new jobs have been created in the region during the first six months of the financial year as a result of £73.5 million spent by overseas firms.

Inward investment is created when an overseas firm invests in the UK. AWM assists inward investment by promoting the region overseas and a network of overseas offices have been set up in 11 locations around the world to help. Interested companies are also supported to find suitable sites and providing access to finance to encourage expansion. Birmingham Post, 8th December 2005 (webpages)

Developments

Library redevelopment

The £600,000 redevelopment of Handsworth Library has begun. The revamped library will provide a 100 seat performance arena, an IT suite and extended space for resources such as the community language collection. Birmingham Post, 1st December 2005 (webpages)

Martineau Galleries development plans

Plans for the next phase of Birmingham's city centre redevelopment – the construction of Martineau Galleries – are being submitted by joint venture organisation, Birmingham Alliance.

The redevelopment covers a 13.5-acre site between Corporation Street, Moor Street Station, and Priory Queensway, on the east-side of the city. It's hoped the construction of Martineau Galleries should lead to the creation of seven thousand jobs. Birmingham Post, 12th December 2005 (webpages)

£157 million programme to help marginal groups find work

West Midlands's most marginalised groups are to receive help from a £157 million programme. The programme aims to help in the region of 150,000 people find work by improving their employability and access to lifelong learning.

The programme aims to benefit people who many include long-term unemployed, people with disabilities, lone parents, ethnic minorities, people who lack basic skills, homeless people, and ex-offenders.

Funding for the programme comes from the European Social Fund and is co-financed by the Learning and Skills Council. Birmingham Post, 19th December 2005 (webpages)

National news

Plans for flagship scheme has been finalised

Plans for AWM's flagship £67 million i54 development scheme, on the Wolverhampton City border with South Staffordshire, have been finalised. The aim is to transform 220 acres of brownfield land next to the M54 into a major employment site. This should create thousands of jobs by 2020, primarily in high technology industries.

Updated plans for the site include space for hi-tech companies and business support services. Offices for corporate business, a four-star hotel; a small business village; and a plots of various sizes to attract SMEs and start-ups have been planned.

The i54 scheme is being developed by AWM in conjunction with a range of local partners, including Wolverhampton City Council .

Birmingham Post, 12th December 2005
(webpages)

Employment rate rises

The number of people in employment rose by 334,000 over the year to September 2005, to reach 28.80 million. This is the highest figure since comparable records began in 1971. This quarterly increase in employment was entirely due to more full-time workers.

According to this release from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the employment rate for people of working age was 74.9 per cent for the three months ending in September 2005, up from 74.7 per cent the previous quarter. Read Employment, ONS, 2005, at

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

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Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE)

Each year the Office of National Statistics conducts a survey of hours and earnings. The ASHE was developed to replace the New Earnings Survey (NES) from 2004.

THE ASHE provides information about the levels, distribution and make-up of earnings and hours worked for employees in all industries and occupations.

Intelligence Newsletter reported on the main findings from the ONS annual survey of hours and earnings. The article noted that:

In April 2005 median gross weekly earnings were £431, up 2.8 per cent from £420 in 2004, for full-time employee jobs on adult rates whose earnings were not affected by absence.

Median full-time earnings for men on adult rates whose earnings were not affected by absence were £472, up 2.5 per cent, compared to £370 for women, up 3.9 per cent.

Median gross weekly earnings for all employee jobs were £337, up 3.0 per cent from £327 in 2004.

Between 2004 and 2005 the weekly earnings for full-time employees of the bottom ten per cent grew by 2.3 per cent compared to a growth of 4.4 per cent for the top ten per cent.

Median gross hourly earnings excluding overtime were £10.68, up by 3.2 per cent from £10.36 in 2004 for full-time employee jobs on adult rates whose earnings were not effected by absence.

Article from Issue 40, Intelligence Newsletter December 2005, SSDA.

Suggestions for improving the work of colleges

Realising the potential report proposes that the purpose of colleges be to improve employability and supply economically valuable skills. Recommendations include having a single inspectorate in the future and establishing a set time period during which failing colleges have the opportunity to improve. The report stresses the need for colleges to consult learners thoroughly, with results of learner surveys being published. It also says that colleges should improve their response to the needs of local and regional employers. Also, there should be funding incentives to encourage colleges to develop vocational specialisms. The report proposes a national workforce development strategy for the sector, led by the Government. Read this review in full at

<http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/reviews>

Or read *Realising the potential: a review of the future role of further education colleges*, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2005, at

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/furthereducation/ferewiew/>

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Pre-Budget Report

The pre-budget report suggested that economic growth this year is expected to be less than anticipated in March. In 2006, growth is forecast at 2-2.5%, with 2.75-3.25% forecast for 2007 and 2008.

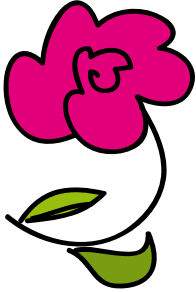
Proposals relating to social inclusion, public services, skills, business community and the environment were announced

References made to skills issues in the pre-budget report included the publication of the interim report of the Leitch Review of Skills. In terms of business community, proposal announced included The establishment of a UK-wide network of innovation centres to support business start-ups; the extension of the New Deal training schemes; and the widening of VAT payment flexibility for small businesses.

The pre-budget report was delivered on 5th December (2005).

Word Puzzle

There are 10 words hidden in the puzzle, connected to horticulture. Can you find them all?



Horticulture

Horticulture is concerned with producing plants and plant products, and maintaining green spaces and landscapes.



Hint: The words can be spelt horizontally, vertically or diagonally and can be in any direction. One word 'FRUIT' has been highlighted for you as an example.

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

Answers can be found on page 9

Research and Publications

Employer's needs

Findings from the Learning at work study

Poor progression prospects and low financial rewards are just two of the factors which can discourage employees from learning in the workplace. This study has identified the elements which influence workplace learning. These include supply side factors such as national targets which help motivate providers to support workplace learning. This report explains the different approaches which may encourage adults, who do not have Level 2 qualifications, to take part in learning. The findings are based on a literature search and interviews. Read **Learning at work: strategies for widening adult participation in learning below Level 2 via the workplace — a scoping study**, Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA), 2005, at

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

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, December 2005

Transforming learning and skills: our annual statement of priorities, Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 2005

With a budget of £10.4 billion, the LSC is focusing resources on areas that will boost productivity and encourage participation, according to its annual statement of priorities. The priorities for 2006-2007 include: making sure all 14-19 year olds have access to high quality learning opportunities; making sure learning becomes demand-led, so that it better meets the needs of learners and employers; and strengthening the LSC's role in economic development so that it can help learners achieve skills for lifelong employability. The LSC will also focus on improving the skills of public sector workers and transform the sector through its Agenda for change programme. Read this review in full at

<http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/reviews> Or read **Transforming learning and skills: our annual statement of priorities**, Learning and Skills Council (LSC), 2005, at <http://www.lsc.gov.uk>

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, December 05

Equal Opportunities

Race equality in further education

The majority of colleges are broadly meeting their responsibilities under the legislation to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote racial equality, according to this report. Nationally, success rates for Black and minority ethnic (BME) learners in colleges have improved at an above average rate, with half of the colleges surveyed saying that they had noticed improvements across all racial groups. However, inspectors found that there is a lack of BME staff in senior positions and on governing bodies in colleges. The report also found that not enough colleges are taking positive action to support the career development of those in minority ethnic groups. There is still work to be done to promote good race relations systematically and embed equality and diversity in the curriculum. Read **Race equality in further education: progress and good practice in colleges in the further education sector in response to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**, Ofsted, 2005, at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications>

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, December 2005

Newsletter sources and miscellaneous items

Miscellaneous items

Answers : Potatoes; Growing Crops; Nursery; Vegetables; Gloves; Garden Centre; Flowers; Plants; Fertilisers; Trees

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 December 2005, 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 December 2005 Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, December 2005

Disclaimer

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