

Focus

on the Labour Market

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

Birmingham and Solihull

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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

More firms for new area of Science Park

A new business incubator facility at Aston Science Park - specially designed to accommodate growing SMEs within the IT and communications sector - has been opened by Coun Mike Whitby, leader of Birmingham City Council.

The iBIC (ICT Business & Innovation Centre), which is located within the Science Park's Holt Court development, provides almost 24,000 sq ft of space - and is already 60 per cent fully occupied.

Since iBIC opened its doors in June, a number of companies have relocated from the science park's former Business & Innovation Centre, now being demolished as part of the park's redevelopment programme.

Full Article available

Birmingham Post 27th September 2005
(webpages)

Elite city hotels have performed fantastically

Booming Birmingham's inner-city regeneration has helped two prestigious hotels perform "fantastically".

Marylebone Warwick Balfour group - owner of Malmaison and Hotel Du Vin - says the two city operations have proved integral to the company's business.

Full article available

Birmingham Post 23rd September 2005
(webpages)

Design team builds on record start

Midland company Systems By Design says it is heading for a record year after the best results in its history.

Demand for the commercial interiors specialist's services around the country, largely design schemes for office and commercial refurbishments for public and private sector clients, has seen turnover exceed £5.5 million in the first six months.

The client list ranges from professional service providers to blue-chip companies including TMobile, Porsche and the NEC in Birmingham.

The continued growth in business has prompted expansion of the company's workforce.

Full Article

Birmingham Post 26th September 2005
(webpages)

Bartering group set to expand in region

Bartercard UK, an organisation specialising in a modern version of one of the world's most ancient ways of trading is set to expand in the Midlands.

Bartercard operates a business exchange "barter" system which allows members companies to buy and sell goods and services without using cash to pay for them.

It has its own currency, Trade Pounds (T£), which holds the equivalent value to the pound sterling. It operates a completely self-contained economy. Trade Pounds are recognised legally by HM Revenue and Customs.

Bartercard UK plans to boost its operations by increasing its number of franchises from 16 to 26.

Jobs that are created as a result of new franchises include administrative positions, trading consultants, sales representatives and account managers.

Full article

Birmingham Post 27th September 2005
(webpages)

Christows aims to hit investment market

The West Midlands financial sector is to grow with the arrival of a new stockbroking firm and the expansion of a second.

Christows, the latest private client stockbroker to open a Birmingham office, is planning a service to manage portfolios of shares quoted on the Alternative Investment Market to combine AIM's inheritance tax advantages with specialist investment management.

Meanwhile, Edward Jones, the US high street stockbroker and independent financial adviser, is gearing up to expand.

Full article available

Birmingham Post 26th September 2005
(webpages)

Health centre go-ahead

A new medical centre is to be built as part of the regeneration of the Ley Hill Estate.

Seven hundred unpopular council homes have already been cleared to make way for over 440 new high-quality homes for sale and for rent and the improvement of 100 existing council properties. The new medical centre earmarked for land sold by the council is to be developed by Ashley House Properties as part of the community improvement drive.

Full article available

Forward, Birmingham City Council,
September Issue

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

UK still behind on productivity

International comparisons of productivity
New data for 2004 continues to show the UK's productivity performance, on a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per worker basis, lower than that of France and the USA, similar to that of Germany, and above that of Japan. UK productivity in 2004, as measured by GDP per worker, was behind that of the average of all other G7 countries. The USA continues to be the productivity leader with productivity 24 per cent above that of the UK. Germany's productivity performance was 3 per cent below that of the UK. Read International comparisons of productivity, Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2005, at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Skills and Education Network
Newsletter, September 2005, Learning and Skills Council

New Employment Hub

At The Hub Of IT
This article in Forward noted how jobseekers in north-west Birmingham are set to benefit from a new employment 'hub' based in Witton, at the former IMI site.

The hub will pull together resources of the council and partners in a £380,000 to provide jobs for inner city residents.

The aim of the hub is to identify and market employment and training opportunities to the local communities in Aston, Handsworth and neighbouring areas, working with established jobs groups, and to encourage employers to take on local people.

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

Bosses condemn 'risky' 2006 minimum wage rise

Businesses today called on the government to reassess next year's rise in the minimum wage because of worsening economic conditions.

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) was speaking ahead of the implementation tomorrow of this year's increase in the minimum wage, from £4.85 to £5.05. Full article available
Guardian, September 30th 2005 (webpages)

Jobseeker numbers on the rise

James Sturcke and agencies

Wednesday September 14, 2005

The number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance has risen for the seventh consecutive month, official figures showed today.

The so-called claimant count rose by 1,600 in August to 866,200, an increase of 31,400 over the year, and remaining at its highest level in more than a year.

Total unemployment, including people not eligible for benefit, rose by 12,000 over the quarter to July to 1.42 million. This left the unemployment rate unchanged at 4.7%.

Full article

The Guardian September 14th 2005
(websites)

Making the most of migrant workers' skills

Progress GB is a national three-year project which is piloting ways to help migrants and refugees to adapt their skills to the UK labour market. It will also help employers to re-think their approaches to these groups. Progress GB is led by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) with partner organisations across the country. There are seven projects, which will take place over two years and around 950 migrant workers and refugees should benefit.

About 36 per cent of refugees are unemployed, which is around six times the national average. Although many have skills that our labour market requires, they need initial support - especially in English - in order to start work, according to the Home Office report entitled "Working to Rebuild Lives".

Progress GB is an EQUAL Development Partnership. Full details provided, Intelligence Newsletter September 2005, Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

Progress to date on the Working Together strategy

Working together — the first year
This document highlights progress to date on the Working Together strategy which was launched by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in May 2004, following a consultation process. Through this strategy, LSC intends to build on good practice and maximise the contribution of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to post-16 learning. Just a few of the key achievements include: the publication of a toolkit to promote best practice, contacts in local LSC offices, and a £2 million capacity-building fund. The LSC will publicise Working Together initiatives through sector publications and a series of events scheduled to take place in January 2006. Read Working together — the first year, LSC, 2005 at <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk> Skills and Education Network Newsletter, September 2005, Learning and Skills Council

Working together toolkit

Working together in practice is a toolkit intended to support Learning and Skills Council (LSC) staff and their Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners. The idea is to help them deliver the key actions identified in the Working Together strategy. The toolkit offers a mixture of guidance on suitable approaches, practical advice and next steps. This is illustrated by case study examples of current LSC/VCS work. Read Working together in practice: volume 1, LSC, 2005 <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk> and Working together in practice: volume 2, LSC, 2005 <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk> Skills and Education Network Newsletter, September 2005, Learning and Skills Council

Word Puzzles

There are 15 words connected to working life hidden in the puzzles. Can you find them all?

Hint: The words can be spelt horizontally, vertically or diagonally and can be in any direction. One word 'desk' has been highlighted for you as an example (puzzle 1). Answers are on page 9.

Puzzle 1

A	A	Q	L	Y
T	R	D	O	L
T	G	E	S	H
O	P	S	P	T
L	L	K	B	R
C	H	A	I	R

Puzzle 2

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

Puzzle 3

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

Research and Publications

Learners needs

Nine out of ten learners are satisfied - National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2003-04

Nine out of ten learners are satisfied with their studies, according to a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) survey of over 43,000 students in work-based learning, adult learning and further education. The survey found that some 61 per cent of further education learners, in the crucial 16-18 year-old age group, got a buzz from learning in 2003/04. The findings are summarised in three sector reports. Read this review in full at

<http://senet.lsc.gov.uk/reviews/bigreview/september2005learners.cfm>

Or read National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2003-04, LSC, 2005, at:

- 1) National Learner Satisfaction Survey: further education report 2003/04
 - 2) National Learner Satisfaction Survey: work-based learning report 2003/04
 - 3) National Learner Satisfaction Survey: adult and community learning providers report 2003/04
- Skills and Education Network Newsletter, September 2005, Learning and Skills Council

Qualification and participation levels

Local information on participation and qualifications

Qualifications and participation in learning at a local level: England 2004/05

These data tables show information about learning according to local LSC area and region. Tables (in Excel format) include percentages of adults taking part in learning; percentages of those who are economically active and qualified to Level 4; percentages of employees receiving job-related training and more. Figures are based on the English Local Labour Force Survey 2004/05. Read Qualifications and participation in learning at a local level: England 2004/05, Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2005, at

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway>

Skills and Education Network Newsletter, September 2005, Learning and Skills Council

Campaigns

Adult Learners' Week 2006

Nominations are now open for the 2006 Adult Learners' Week Awards. Categories are Individuals, Families, Groups, and Projects and programmes.

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

Full details available

Intelligence Newsletter September 2005, Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

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

Events

Aimhigher Workshop

West Midlands Aimhigher Learning Pathways System (ALPS)

Thursday 3rd November 2005 1:30pm to 3:30pm, Charter House

Aimhigher are running a training session giving an overview and interactive, hands-on experience of using the new progression 'mapping' website developed by Aimhigher in the West Midlands in partnership with all of post-16 providers and Connexions and Nextstep networks in the region.

The event is funded by Aimhigher Birmingham and Solihull and attendance is free of charge. The venue accommodates 10 delegates, and booking is on a first come first served basis. Priority will be given to nextstep contractors.

A booking form for the event is also enclosed. For further information about this Aimhigher Event contact Mike Thompson, Aimhigher Programme Officer on telephone 07887 821249 / 0121 248 8526 or email mike.thompson@connexions-bs.co.uk.

Newsletter sources and miscellaneous items

Miscellaneous items

Answers - Puzzle 1: Desk, Chair. Puzzle 2: Inray, Stool, Payslip. Puzzle 3: Colleagues, Manager, Lunch, Communication, Induction, Pigeon hole, Reception, Meeting, Car park, Handbook, Pen.

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 August 2005

BBC News Education webpages website

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

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

Department for Education and Skills

<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>

Disclaimer

The information contained in this newsletter is collected from different sources and may include opinions or views which do not necessarily reflect those of **nextstep**.

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.

