

4. Summary

- Information, advice and guidance was given to 88 potential candidates interested in further education
- Destination follow up was achieved on 82% of the potential candidates
- Of the 72 candidates where follow up information was achieved
 - 30 candidates had enrolled on a vocational course
 - 16 candidates were looking for employment within the industry
 - 6 candidates had decided to move out of the industry
 - 16 candidates gave reasons for not pursuing an educational route
 - 4 candidates did not wish to give information
- Contact was made with 34 companies
 - The majority of companies were familiar with what HE offered
 - Several companies showed an interest in the New Diplomas
 - Several companies were more interested in management courses than technical courses for their senior personnel
 - Some companies considered OSAT to be at level 2 only

5. Project mechanics

In order to reach the largest number of potential learners the project had three phases:

- **Phase one: Contact with employers**

During July and August 2008 employers were contacted and information advice and guidance was offered on potential training routes for their employees.

HI-LLN did not have a sector specific employer database. Initial employer contact was made by:

- networking using existing contacts of the project leader
- referrals from three main groups that were contacted early in July by the project leader:
 - Train 2 Gain SE
 - Connexions
 - Sector specific training boards.

- **Phase two: Offering IAG to potential candidates**

Locally held IAG events were offered. These events were advertised using local radio and local newspaper and places could be booked by potential candidates.

The booking system was done via mobile phone or email. This system of booking allowed capture of sufficient contact information for the subsequent follow up destination survey.

A contact database was used to record candidate information.

- **Phase three: Follow up destination survey**

An attempt was made to contact all potential candidates, follow up information was recorded for 82% of the candidates. Where candidates had enrolled on a course this was recorded. Where candidates had not enrolled on a course the reason for not enrolling was recorded.

6. Employer Engagement

It was decided not to use the usual methods of contacting employers, a mail merge to employers inviting them to attend a function, but to employ a networking approach.

Representatives of various bodies with established contacts with employers and employees were informed of the project; these included the Train 2 Gain South East team, Connexions, Sector skills council, and trade organisations. The representatives were informed that should an employer or employee require advice on further training or qualifications then the project leader would immediately respond.

The project leader represented HI-LLN at several events organised by Eastleigh College; these events afforded the project leader an opportunity to meet and explain the LLN objectives to employers. These events led to additional meetings with employers with regard to potential candidates.

The HI-LLN was generally unknown to the employers contacted; this was an advantage as the employer considered the initial contact as representing Higher Education and not selling an existing Higher Education Institutions product.

Employers contacted ranged from large companies to SMEs with less than 10 employees. The number of employers contacted, during the project, was not large enough to produce quantitative data for analysis, however re-current themes did occur from the contacts made; these are detailed in Appendix 1 and form part of the action plan recommended for the HI-LLN Construction Curriculum Group.

7. IAG to potential candidates

IAG was offered to potential candidates at events held in local colleges during the first week in September. It was apparent, at an early stage in July/August, that potential candidates contacted would like information prior to these organised events; these candidates were supported by one-to-one meetings, email and telephone.

The interest from advertising on local radio and newspapers was probably increased by the sharp downturn in the construction sector; many contacts made had, or expected to have, employment problems related to the downturn.

Whilst almost all the potential candidates agreed to participate in the follow up survey 16 of the candidates could not be contacted in October; either their contact telephone number was no longer operational or there was no answer.

8. Follow up destination survey

Follow up information was obtained from 72 potential candidates.

30 candidates had enrolled on vocational courses; 2 of these candidates had enrolled on courses outside HI-LLN area, the remainder had found suitable courses within the locality.

Initially, when contacted, 7 candidates were actively seeking employment; this number had risen to 16 by the time the follow up survey was conducted in October. Only one of these candidates had enrolled on a course, the others did not feel that they could enter education until they had found employment. Whilst funding a qualification was cited as a reason, the predominate reason given was the uncertainty of the location of future employment.

6 candidates were looking for employment outside the industry; these candidates were still employed but could no longer see a future within the construction industry. They all indicated that it was the downturn that had led them to this decision.

16 candidates gave other reasons for not pursuing an educational route; the reasons given are included in Appendix 2.

Key themes indicated;

- The employer could not see a benefit to their company for the qualification.
- The candidate could not afford, either in money or time, the qualification
- Only one candidate thought that returning to education would cause a problem

The project captured insufficient data to indicate that varying the existing delivery mechanisms for the qualifications offered would have made a substantial difference to the take up of qualifications.

Only one candidate required a qualification/ delivery mechanism that was not delivered in the HI-LLN area – the requirement was for a part time honours degree in Building Services Engineering – this candidate chose to go to a London University for the qualification.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

Employers have a good knowledge of the traditional vocational qualifications on offer in the HI-LLN area, however, there is a lack of understanding relating to the Foundation Degrees offered. It is recommended that the CCG produce a leaflet on Foundation Degrees offered in the HI-LLN area, explain the work based content, provide information on possible APEL and indicate the possible progression routes that these qualifications provide.

It is recommended that the CCG work with Construction Skills to raise the profile of Technician Apprenticeships.

At present there is little central information on what is, or could be, offered by Colleges and Universities to support CPD within the HI-LLN area. It is recommended that the CCG researches this and attempts to provide a single document that assists employers and employees with CPD.

Several large employers suggested that more information on the New Diplomas would be useful. It is recommended that small, targeted, IAG events may be provided for these employers. An example may be contacting the Staff Development Officers of the Local Authorities within the area and running a workshop type event.

Appendix 1

Key messages from employers contacted.

- Most employers were conversant with the Higher Education courses available within their local area, predominately National Certificate, Higher National Certificate and part time degrees.
- There was a lack of understanding of foundation degrees, “*degrees for people who are unable to take a proper degree*” was one view expressed, “*a three year HNC*” was another. Employers appeared surprised to hear that they were for industry attempting to meet industries needs. The idea of tailoring a foundation degree to meet the individual employers’ needs, the use of APEL to reduce conventional contact time and the value of the qualification were generally misunderstood.
- Technician apprenticeships were seldom considered, often not known about by employers, however the advantages of craft apprenticeships were generally understood and valued.
- CPD, continued professional development, was discussed with several employers, an understanding of the necessity for CPD was apparent – however none of the employers had considered a formalised approach to CPD. None of the Employers had considered linking in house training to a qualification or credit towards a qualification. Advice was given on several of the on-line offers available and several employers said they would investigate this further.
- Several of the larger employers were interested in the New Diplomas and how they may impact on their recruitment in the future. At the time of the project it was difficult to advise on the New Diplomas, they only started in September 2008 locally, but advice on these important new qualifications, is an area that should be revisited in 2009.

Appendix 2

Reasons for not pursuing an educational route

- Employer would not fund the qualification
- Employer would give the time to the employee – the course did not run in the evenings
- Candidate was concerned about asking the employer because of the current climate within the industry
- Candidate could not afford the course fees (self employed)
- Candidate could not afford the time (self employed)
- Candidate concerned about ability to succeed
- Uncertainty over the location of future employment