

Our  
future:  
**It's in  
our hands.**

# **FE works:**

**supporting individuals,  
employers and communities**





# How FE can help



'I firmly believe that all further education colleges and providers have a key role to play in serving their local communities. I have seen first hand the commitment, drive and determination you show in meeting the needs of local people and local businesses. We all share a passion for developing

the skills that transform lives, help employers stay competitive and build stronger communities.

Today, more than ever, we need to be creative and flexible in the way in which we help this country respond to the economic challenges we face. That is why we have introduced new flexibilities to help us do more for small and medium-sized employers and people affected by redundancy. We must do what we can, to enable you to do more for local businesses and communities.

Already, we have seen how the FE system has responded quickly to the current situation. As this guide sets out, so many of you have already risen to the challenge of helping people to get through this downturn and, more importantly, to ensure that individuals and businesses emerge stronger – with the skills they need for future success.'

**John Denham**  
Secretary of State for Innovation,  
Universities and Skills



'This publication demonstrates the very effective support being given to employers, communities and individuals by the FE system. Across the country we are showing how flexible and innovative we can be, in responding quickly and effectively to give employers and individuals

the skills and support they need. We have an important leadership role to play, working in partnership with others to ensure we are developing local solutions to meet local needs.'

**Martin Doel**  
Chief Executive, Association of Colleges



'This guide includes a selection of encouraging examples - there are many more - describing the ways in which colleges and providers from the private and third sectors are responding to the real time needs of the employers, individuals and communities they serve. Our FE system is a diverse

one, with many strengths. Its capacity to respond quickly and flexibly to changing economic and social needs, throughout the country, should never be underestimated. As these examples show, we have a critical role to play in helping businesses and individuals survive and thrive.'

**Graham Hoyle**  
Chief Executive,  
Association of Learning Providers



'The FE system can offer the skills and commitment needed to reach out to people, including those who are unemployed, and to meet their diverse learning needs - from helping people enter Apprenticeships, to supporting older learners seeking new skills for a shifting jobs market. Working

closely with local communities means we are well placed to develop integrated responses to the needs of individuals, families and neighbourhoods facing economic difficulties.'

**Cheryl Turner**  
Development Officer, NIACE, on behalf of  
the Third Sector National Learning Alliance

# Giving businesses the skills they need

In the current economic climate, employers need colleges and providers to be proactive, working with them to identify the ways they can maximise their competitiveness and sustainability. Some colleges and training providers are showing how flexible they can be: inviting employers in at weekends, matching training to fit new work patterns, offering them support from business advice services, job agencies and brokers; or access to online diagnostic assessments for literacy, numeracy and ICT.

## Improving skills to boost competitiveness

In an economic downturn, investing in training becomes even more important if companies are to secure a competitive edge. Research in 2007 confirmed that firms who cut out training were two and a half times more likely to fail than those that did not, recognising that it's competent, committed staff who make the difference to productivity, quality and value.

The Train to Gain service is already helping more and more employers improve their competitiveness. The additional flexibilities recently announced by the Government will help colleges and providers reach more businesses, and give them the support and training that will be crucial to their survival and success. This will include a greater focus on support in business critical areas – such as sales and marketing, customer service and IT.

Nightingale Roofing and Building Services is a small but fast-growing company offering roofing and associated building work throughout the South West. They believe that training employees in a broad range of skills has been their key to success. Through Train to Gain they have helped their employees develop specialist roofing skills, as well as supervisory skills training for team leaders. This has already paid off with real benefits to the business – having higher skilled staff has increased levels of innovation, which has led to the company winning several extra contracts. And the training has really motivated staff – clients have been impressed by the enhanced customer service and staff loyalty has increased too.

Gateshead College works with Nissan to deliver a range of training programmes, including pre-employment training programmes for adults wanting to work in

Nissan, Apprenticeships and pre-Apprenticeships, and a Foundation Degree in Operations Improvement for Nissan and supply chain staff. Much of the work with Nissan and its supply chain companies is focused on improving productivity through programmes and qualifications. The process is normally carried out entirely on employer premises so that the learning is real and contextualised for the learner and the company. In recent work with Nissan, the College has adopted a productivity hit squad approach, using its own productivity trainers and assessors to engage intensively with employers to bring about productivity gains. Trainers and assessors work at Nissan across the 24-hour three-shift pattern over seven days a week.

## Flexible delivery

Forging links with employers is crucial. Colleges and providers need to be on the front foot, making the first move to talk to those employers who will benefit from training. Today more than ever, we need to be creative and flexible when we think about delivering training under challenging conditions.

As a result of the downturn, some companies have had to cut back on shifts or reduce their working week. Many colleges and providers have been quick to work with companies, to offer their employees training on those days when they are not working. This includes working with a number of large employers, using their downtime to provide training and qualifications to increase productivity when production picks up. This avoids laying off staff and retains and develops skill and productivity levels in anticipation of better times ahead.



Hull is a major centre for the manufacture of caravans and trailers in the UK but recent months have seen sales fall dramatically, with many companies moving to three or four day weeks. Hull College has been working with organisations directly affected and those who may be at risk across the supply chain, to strengthen their resilience to the ongoing economic situation. The college has targeted key suppliers, ranging from companies making plastic drums to those providing cleaning services, office supplies and floristry for caravan manufacturers. Working with employers, they have put together packages to upskill employees and improve their performance so that they are ready to compete in a more volatile marketplace.

Now, more than ever, flexibility in when, where and how training is delivered is key to how the FE system needs to support employers. It means matching courses to fit shift patterns; offering courses online; or adopting a more modular mode of delivery to fit learners' circumstances. Stockport College, for instance, delivers its Gas Corgi assessment programmes for self-employed people from 6.30am, to minimise the impact on the working day.

Construction Learning World provides flexibility through a team of over 100 directly employed assessors and internal verifiers, all of whom carry out NVQ assessment and training on over 1,000 construction sites at any one time. Working with Metroplex to provide NVQs for workers on the London Underground, Construction Learning World's assessor could only observe work during the night shift, between 1am and 4.30am, while the tube trains were not running. The assessor was required to undertake

special induction training before being allowed on the tracks in order to meet the tight health and safety requirements.

Due to the constraints of company shift patterns, clients facing redundancy at Wincanton Logistics were unable to access Burton College's main campus facilities. Consequently, the college parked its e-bus in their car park, so they could access training and support 24/7. During the eight-week period of redundancy notice, employees were also offered help in identifying local job opportunities, job search, CV preparation and writing formal letters.

### **Employer-based training centres**

Many colleges and providers already deliver most of their workforce training on site. In some cases, employers have also invested in learning centres based on their own premises. These offer accessible and flexible provision to employees, with many companies also opening up the facilities to the wider community.

Derby College has managed a well-established learning centre within the Derby Rolls-Royce site for almost 10 years, supporting the company through various periods of downsizing. The centre provides training for Rolls-Royce employees (current and past), their families and the local community. Learners can also use the centre's internet facilities for help with finding a job and writing CVs.

### **Tailoring provision to meet skill needs**

Listening to what employers need and matching training provision to reflect that ensures that the FE system is delivering the workforce employers want. Skills that support new product development and enhance services will help employers gain a competitive advantage, which will be crucial to their current and future success.

Care Training East Midlands (CTEM) has worked with Nottingham City Transport (NCT) to provide them with the skills they need for success. As well as helping to train their existing workforce they also worked with the company to address their recruitment needs. CTEM used its Skills for Jobs contract to provide the company with job-ready candidates for interviews. Individuals looking for work were offered information and advice to make sure they were genuinely suited for, and interested in, a job with NCT. This saved time for NCT and ensured they were presented with candidates who had the skills and attributes they were looking for.

And, to help deliver this, CTEM developed a selection of courses that were tailor made to prepare individuals for work with NCT.

## Investing in Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a key route to building the national skills base. Over 130,000 employers are offering Apprenticeship places in over 180 different areas across 80 industry sectors. In addition, the Government is currently looking at how it can use the public procurement process to encourage companies with significant government-funded contracts to offer Apprenticeships. Colleges and other providers are showing their commitment to this key programme by taking on their own Apprentices. Colleges are also ensuring that Apprentices are recruited as part of their procurement contracts. 497 Apprentices are already employed and more are likely to be recruited.

Following enquiries from aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul employers, Prospects College in Essex introduced an Aircraft Maintenance Apprenticeship programme. Employers reported that they could recruit licensed engineers straight from university to work within their operations but these engineers did not have the hand skills required. Working with the companies, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Learning and Skills Council, Prospects used the Aircraft Maintenance units in the Performing Engineering Operations NVQ to develop a tailor-made Apprenticeship programme that would meet employers' needs.

Like many other hospitality employers, Folio Hotels were finding it increasingly difficult to source and retain quality chefs and receptionists in their hotels. They decided to develop their own talent by creating the Chef School and Reception School in partnership with training provider **esg**. The Schools offer a 12-month intensive, structured training and development Apprenticeship programme which allows hotels within the group to recruit and develop their employees. The students benefit from a focused training programme which has clear progression to supervisor and manager roles within their hotel group.

Westminster Kingsway College is developing a group Apprenticeship scheme in association with Vital Regeneration and Central West Group Apprentices, funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in London. The scheme will recruit and train Apprentices and act as an agency hiring the Apprentices out to local small employers.

## Customising provision to fill vacancies

Across the country, colleges and training providers are working with businesses to train up local unemployed people with the skills employers need to fill their vacancies.

This could mean FE providers working one to one with an individual employer. Increasingly, however, it might involve Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) between employers and Jobcentre Plus, with employers agreeing to provide opportunities for people out of work in return for job-ready candidates to fill vacancies.

Barnfield College, working in partnership with London Luton Airport, the airport retailers, Jobcentre Plus and Skillsmart (the Sector Skills Council), are developing a new local retail pathway to employment. This will help learners with interview techniques, literacy and numeracy skills, and more specific, airport-based retailing knowledge. As the programme is tailored to airport retailing and partly delivered by airside retail staff, learners should be more likely to meet employment criteria, so cutting airport retailers' recruitment costs and the time taken in training recruits to be fully operational.

Bury College customised a Skills for Jobs programme for long-term unemployed people to help them apply for jobs at the new Morrison's store in Whitefield. It developed the specific skills that the supermarket chain required and covered areas such as confidence building, customer care, Morrison's history, IT, completing application forms, preparing for interview and mock interviews. The programme ran three days a week over three weeks, with all candidates guaranteed an interview.

When they recruited for their new flagship store in central Manchester, the Cooperative were keen to draw on the talents of local people, including unemployed people. Training provider TNG devised a pre-recruitment training course for candidates, which included customer service, health and safety at work, Basic Food Hygiene Level 1 and interview techniques. Candidates developed the skills needed to become an employee at the Cooperative, building their confidence to succeed at the guaranteed interview they received at the end of the course. Out of the 19 candidates on the course, nine were offered a job, three of them as supervisors.

Through their Skills for Jobs programme, which has involved 300 participants, with an 80 per cent success rate, Stoke College is working with Jobcentre Plus and local employers such as Next, Tesco and New Look to engage with unemployed people and support them to get back into work. Flexible support is their key to overcoming barriers. The college also works with Jobcentre Plus, the probation service and local



community organisations to help disadvantaged individuals, who may have drugs problems, learning difficulties or who are long-term unemployed. 300 individuals have participated in the programme, with 65 per cent moving on into work.

The National Skills Academy for Construction, launched by ConstructionSkills in 2006, is working with partners to develop the Cathall Road Construction Training Centre. A mile from the Olympic Park and Stratford City in East London, the centre will provide bespoke training for

people in the local area to help them acquire the skills that will be needed locally. As this is an area with some of the highest levels of unemployment in the UK, this programme will be key to developing the skills of local people to help them progress into employment.

# Helping individuals

FE colleges and providers are already playing a key role in helping people realise their employment ambitions, whether they are new to the jobs market, currently unemployed or considering a career change. Last year, almost 373,000 learners were receiving Job Seeker's Allowance or a means-tested benefit. A recent LSC survey also showed that, of those learners who had undertaken a further education course while receiving out-of-work benefits, two fifths had gone on to work at some point after finishing their course.

Even those who had not yet moved into work pointed to the positive personal and social benefits of their learning - improved communication skills, enhanced employability and increased confidence - which they felt had put them in a better position to get a job.

The positive knock-on effect of giving people the opportunity to realise their aspirations, for their families and their communities, is key to greater social mobility and stronger communities. People with better skills are more likely to be active citizens, to vote, and to lead happier and healthier lives. Their children are likely to do better at school and to have higher ambitions and better incomes. And as the Foresight Report acknowledged, developing skills throughout your life can promote mental wellbeing. Continuing to keep individuals engaged in learning, whether by adopting more flexible training patterns in the workplace or through community-based initiatives, is increasingly important.

## Giving people the help and advice they need

Most people need some help to tackle the problems that hold them back. Those barriers are different for everyone - lack of knowledge about courses and careers, perhaps, finding suitable childcare, understanding employment rights, resolving problems with housing or transport.

Appropriate advice, guidance and sometimes more practical help are crucial - now more than ever. That can be delivered through a local FE college or provider, Connexions, or through independent careers advice for adults: the national Careers Advice Service and local nextstep services. And in the future, independent advice will be delivered through the new adult advancement and careers service, which will not only help people make the right decisions about learning and training, but will also connect them to advice on related issues including employment rights, housing, childcare, disability, and personal finance.

Scott registered with a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at training provider sencia and received one-to-one support, including help with completing an online

application and mock interviews. He was granted an interview with a local firm but was worried that he would fail because he lacked interview clothes. His DEA organised a purchase order with Burton's in the Trafford Centre and the new clothes added to his confidence - he was offered the job as a Pharmaceutical Assistant. Another client, Denise, had her confidence knocked after a year of job application rejection. Work on her CV and regular meetings for confidence building led to her dream job as a medical receptionist.

Colleges and providers are also able to support wider skills development, such as financial management, particularly to help those who are most vulnerable to the consequences of poor financial decisions.

The Basic Skills Agency and now NIACE have been delivering financial capability work linked to literacy, language and numeracy skills since 2001. This has focused on developing the capacity of literacy, language and numeracy tutors, many of whom are already working in local communities. Along with teaching resources focused on how to embed financial learning into their existing teaching, a qualification for teachers, Delivering Literacy, Language and Numeracy in the Context of Finance has been developed. This empowers

learners by providing them with skills to apply to a range of financial situations throughout their lives, rather than giving financial information, which they might struggle to understand or interpret. It also helps to build the financial capability of the tutors, who are themselves employees, members of families and communities.

Working with Newcastle City Council Family Learning Service has meant that family learning tutors across Newcastle are now able to deliver financial capability. They in turn have cascaded this across the North East to be embedded in mainstream literacy and numeracy courses including Baby Budgeting and Introduction to the Child Trust Fund, being delivered in Newcastle.

In Cornwall, the Local Authority Adult Education Service worked in partnership with Union Learning Representatives to deliver 'Personal Finance' in the workplace. The course also included literacy and numeracy content but was marketed as personal finance to increase its appeal - indeed, one workplace had over 80 learners on a waiting list. A range of public and private sector employers was involved, including HMRC, the MOD, Immerys Minerals, Serco and McAlpine, and learning provision was also developed for self-employed people. Both the MOD and Immerys were in the process of making redundancies; the learning was tailored to prepare people both for future employment and to use their redundancy money effectively. As part of both of these projects, learners went on to achieve literacy and/or numeracy qualifications.

The citizen-centred approach can be applied in a number of settings such as prisons, the voluntary sector and FE colleges. It also allows people to develop the skills to interact appropriately with financial services, to make sound financial decisions and to plan for and respond to changing financial circumstances and unforeseen events.

## Improving employability

Colleges and providers are already focused on giving people the skills and qualifications they need to find a job and progress within employment. Working with individuals to improve employability is central to their success, whether that's providing employability skills training to find a job, or more specialised training for a new direction or a particular vacancy.

Skills Training UK has a team of Account Managers who work in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and engage with employers who are recruiting.

Schuh at the Westfield Shopping Centre recently accepted 13 New Deal customers for their new store. Recruitment included a four-day pre-employment



Skills Training UK in understanding in detail the client's requirements before the training, to match customers to the roles available. The training gave people a chance to really understand the roles they were applying for and help with general confidence or other barriers, such as ID and housing, before going forward for the job. Following their successful recruitment, each person then had the opportunity to work towards their NVQ in Retail or Customer Service through Train to Gain, which helped them gain more skills, boost confidence, increase productivity and sustain their new career.

Training 2000 offers support to unemployed individuals and employers engaged in Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs). Partnering with the local authority, JCP and the LSC, Training 2000 has established joint initiatives to engage employers in recruiting local unemployed people for local jobs. Individuals engage in tailored pre-employment activities using employer links and in partnership with other providers to facilitate a seamless transition into post-employment training through Train to Gain or Apprenticeships.

Keeping the unemployed people in touch with work through structured work experience and providing them with tailored programmes that lead to a long-term job has proved a successful strategy for many colleges and providers. City of Bristol College, for example, has worked with approximately 1,000 small employers who offer work experience and eventual job placements. Every participant has an allocated Learning Organiser and Facilitator, who oversees their route back into employment, including organising work experience for each participant and converting that work experience into a job.

Volunteering can often be used to give people experience of the world of work, to improve their overall employability and lead to a sustainable job. The College of North West London has engaged several unemployed people in volunteering linked to the development of the Olympics site. The Personal Best Level 1 programme has given people real experience of the workplace and, for many, has helped them move into a full-time job.

Many people who are not working and who lack qualifications are nervous about taking up training or learning opportunities. This is where more informal types of learning can really help to build their confidence, as well as enhance the quality of their lives and, potentially, lead on to more formal learning and employment.

One father, Charlie, who started learning informally with his children after school before moving on to literacy, numeracy and IT classes, said, 'Before, I really didn't have much focus. Now, thanks to the adult learning classes, I have a full-time job and I'm gaining qualifications left, right and centre! It's really helped me with how I relate to my own children too.'

### **Flexible delivery**

Colleges and providers are already keenly aware of the need to offer learning at a time when people can access it.

Many of Lewisham College's working students, for instance, are in low-paid casual jobs, without much job security. Part-time day and evening courses are helping them to improve their language and employability skills so they have a greater chance of moving to more sustainable employment.

Providers are finding other flexibilities in offering multiple start dates for courses or starting them at times that respond to the needs of learners. Modularising delivery allows learners to join programmes at different stages and build up towards a full qualification in a number of ways, including taking some modules in the evenings. Accelerated courses mean individuals can gain qualifications rapidly where they already have a high level of expertise. Some providers are even enabling learners to join a course late by providing them with individual coaching, so they can catch up and join the main group.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College has tailored its Classroom Assistant training to support the priorities of New Deal candidates referred through the Jobcentre, more than 70 per cent of whom are lone parents. They adapt timetables, promote links with learners' children's schools, and offer flexible work placements and support with travel and childcare costs. Job search activities include guidance on employment concerns such as childcare access and losing benefits, and looking at ways that opportunities complement their priority needs.

Learning packages which incorporate e-learning can allow learners to access learning at their desk, from home or work, or via the various community or high street learning centres that are available through colleges and providers and through learndirect or UK Online.

IT provision is delivered at numerous Manchester College sites across the city on a roll-on/roll-off basis. Students can attend at any time for an assessment, carry out the most appropriate tutor-driven course and then progress onto the next element as they wish. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is also provided on a roll-on/roll-off basis at all times of the day all over the city. This includes English for Customer Care, which is two hours a week in the evenings, delivered on employer premises, tailored to the needs of individuals.

Protocol Skills has developed Genesis, an online learning platform that is accessible 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. One client to benefit is the HBOS Online team in Leeds. Traditional paper-based training delivery was seen as too time consuming and disruptive in a controlled, call centre environment. In contrast, Genesis provides a much more accessible



means of training and assessing, including digital voice recordings, photos, videos and e-documentation, so learners can complete units and record evidence as they carry out their everyday job. As well as enabling more people to complete a course more quickly, there has been a 20 per cent increase in learners securing promotion (for those completing NVQs) and improved staff retention – since completing their training the only people to have left the department are those who have progressed on to other roles within HBOS.

## **Delivering employment outcomes**

Many colleges and FE providers are already making the best use of Train to Gain as a way of getting more people into sustainable employment. Transferable skills broaden people's job options in difficult times. High quality vocational skills training not only boosts employability but also adds value to earning potential.

TBG Learning has been working closely with Iceland in Kent, combining funding from different streams to provide learners with an end-to-end integrated employment and skills service. They have successfully helped many New Deal participants into full-time employment, many of whom have then taken up further training through Train to Gain.

Martin Coleborn was taken on as a store assistant six months ago and has already been promoted to Duty Manager. He has continued to train, through Iceland's participation in Train to Gain, and has recently gained an NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service.

## **Meeting local skills needs**

Matching training to local skills gaps makes sense not just from an employer's perspective but also from an individual's, helping to move those who are out of work, or in vulnerable areas of employment, into more sustainable jobs. The Teacher Development Unit at Lewisham College, for instance, has recently run a construction orientated course, preparing people to teach in the lifelong learning sector. It targets people in the construction workforce who may be worried about their employment and encourages them to think about a career in teaching.

The Sainsbury's distribution centre at Hams Hall in Coleshill, North Warwickshire, employs over 800 people, round the clock, seven days a week. Sainsbury's recognised that low levels of literacy and numeracy impact on business performance and that encouraging and enabling staff to gain skills to progress within the business would reduce staff turnover as motivation and self-confidence increased. Yet this had to be balanced

with operational demands. So Sainsbury's provided a dedicated learning centre and paid time off for staff to learn, and the North Warwickshire and Hinckley College delivered training at times to suit shift patterns – even at midnight.

Westminster Kingsway College has a new Regional Assessment Academy, which they see as having the potential of taking those with occupational competence, training them as NVQ assessors, and then providing them with employment as assessors in the workplace - a real opportunity for people being made unemployed through the current economic downturn.

## **Making good use of Apprenticeships**

YMCA Training offers Apprenticeships to employers' existing staff as well as matching young people with suitable businesses where they can work for their Apprenticeship. 20 year old Dean Tylor from Salford became an Amenity Horticulture Apprentice at Worsley Golf Club, seeing it as an ideal way to improve his practical skills fast and get an academic qualification at the same time. Dean replaced an experienced greenkeeper, so it was a steep learning curve, but it also meant he was given more responsibilities earlier – a challenge he rose to. Dean said, 'I have been given the chance to learn and have accomplished many goals which, without the backing of YMCA Training, I may never have had the chance to do. I'm really enjoying my work as a greenkeeper.'

HB Training delivers Apprenticeship programmes for the construction sector where young people are employed by the provider, with employers only paying a contribution to wages while the trainee is on site undertaking work experience. The programme allows employers to support young people entering the industry while minimising overheads and ensures that the trainee has a wide range of work experience across a number of construction sites and employers.



## Helping those at risk of redundancy

Early intervention, as soon as redundancy is announced, can avoid a period of unemployment. Demand for training and education – at all levels - tends to grow during an economic downturn, as people recognise that better skills and qualifications add weight to their CV and give them the edge in a competitive recruitment market.

BAe are to reduce their workforce by 450 over the next eighteen months. Hull College and other providers are already working with the first 120 employees, who are taking voluntary redundancy, so they can access the training they need to reskill.

Bootle High School is closing down next year, which means that all those currently working in the school meals service will be looking for alternative employment. The school worked with Qube Learning to give staff the opportunity to gain an NVQ Level 2 in Food Processing

& Cooking and, most importantly, the skills and confidence they need to help them find suitable jobs once the school closes. All the training is delivered in the workplace, to fit in around working patterns and family commitments. It includes individual information, advice and guidance and one-to-one coaching and mentoring.

In partnership with Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage Business Initiative, North Hertfordshire College is launching the Stevenage Rapid Response to Redundancy service. The service offers one point of contact for individuals or employers facing redundancy. Callers will be signposted to training and education programmes and be able to access Skills for Life training and information, advice and guidance, along with support for job search, CV writing and interview skills.

# Helping communities

FE colleges and providers are at the heart of local communities, able to understand and respond to what local people and businesses need. They are uniquely placed to unlock talent, to help individuals succeed, and to work with partners to unite and regenerate communities. And they are vital to helping those who are excluded from education, the labour market and society.

Many colleges and providers are already actively involved in their community: giving people the language skills they need to participate as active citizens; helping them develop the skills the local labour market needs; and encouraging them to progress further for the benefit of themselves and their families. Many are opening their facilities to local communities, offering, for example, access to well-resourced libraries and learning centres with internet enabled PCs; support for writing CVs, help with job applications and job searches; and expert information, advice and guidance sessions.

## Delivering an integrated response

Many colleges and providers are playing an active role in local partnerships, proactively working with local authorities and business organisations such as the Confederation of British Industry, the British Chamber of Commerce and Business Link, the Federation of Small Businesses and Business in the Community. There are many excellent and innovative partnerships with regional development agencies, sector skills councils, universities and other education and training providers, unions and employers. Across the country, colleges and providers are leading the way, developing customer focused services and training packages which meet the needs of business, individuals and communities.

Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College (EHWLC) is leading on a partnership with several local and regional training providers, brokers and referral agencies. The partnership is developing a coherent package of integrated services that are available to unemployed residents to help them move into work. This collective approach maximises the strength and expertise of each of the partner organisations. It integrates skills and employment support in a way that makes sense for the customer and delivers greater value for money.

Offenders in the Community is an inspiring project which focuses on getting offenders – both in custody and in the community – into learning, training and jobs. It is led by Lancaster and Morecambe College but works in partnership with the National Probation Service, CxL Ltd, Jobcentre Plus and other FE providers. Offenders' needs are assessed through an initial interview and regularly monitored to make sure their learning is on track. Seven key workers help offenders in the community to become job ready by visiting them as they work. Key workers improvise by setting up impromptu offices on site and by offering support in locations ranging from country parks to bike sheds. One learner said, 'It makes sense to get a certificate when you have to do unpaid work anyway.' Offenders in custody are offered information, advice and guidance by college staff and are referred to the pre-release course. This forms part of the 'through the gate' aspect of the project, whereby offenders reaching the end of their sentence are enrolled on courses focusing on motivation and employment skills. The project also funds an Employer Engagement Officer, who promotes Train to Gain with employers, encouraging them to give offenders a much needed opportunity in a workplace setting. The success of the project is illustrated by 59 offenders finding jobs and 100 taking up learning.



## **Businesses, individuals and communities need your help**

These pages offer just a few examples of how colleges and providers are meeting the challenges of the current climate. What unites them is their flexibility and innovation, their determination to give employers, individuals and communities the support they need to build resilience and emerge stronger. By thinking creatively about what we can do to help, the FE system can make a very real difference.

## **For further information**

For details of your local college, visit the AoC website:

**[www.aoc.co.uk](http://www.aoc.co.uk)**

For details of your local work-based training provider, visit the ALP website:

**[enquiries@learningproviders.org](mailto:enquiries@learningproviders.org)**

To find out more about voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises involved in learning, visit the Third Sector National Learning Alliance website:

**[www.tsnal.org.uk](http://www.tsnal.org.uk)** (from mid December '08)

To find out more about how Train to Gain can help, employers should call 0800 015 55 45 or visit

**[traintogain.gov.uk](http://traintogain.gov.uk)**

Individuals and employers can access the information they need on skills via a dedicated phone line and website:

0800 011 30 30 or website:

**[lsc.gov.uk/inourhands](http://lsc.gov.uk/inourhands)**



