

MINISTER FOR SKILLS BACKS WHOLE ORGANISATION APPROACH From The Network: for workplace, language, literacy and numeracy

24 January 2006

Phil Hope, the Government's Skills Minister; will be underlining the importance of workplace language, literacy and numeracy training in the bid to improve the skills of Britain's workforce during a speech in Liverpool on 7 February. He will be speaking, via a video presentation, at the national conference of The Network, a part of Lancaster University which conducts research and offers professional development training in Skills for Life (SfL).

Mr Hope will stress the need for a "whole organisation approach to workplace Skills for Life", which is the theme of the Network's 8th national conference being held over two days at the Radisson Hotel, Liverpool. While endorsing the useful work being done by The Network in language, literacy and numeracy provision, he will also spell out the need for employers to give their full backing to SfL training initiatives.

The event will bring together major stakeholders involved in this increasingly important field - FE managers, private providers, employers, Sector Skills managers, Learning Skills Councils, Trade Unions and Regional Development Agency managers. More than 120 participants will also have the chance to get an up-to-date view of the progress of the Government's engagement with SfL.

"We do not intend to rehearse ongoing practical problems but to offer some possible solutions," says Eddie Little, The Network's Director of Operations. "To this end, there will be an extensive array of presentations from key agencies and a range of interactive workshops that will encourage the dissemination of good practice and current research."

Other keynote speakers are Neil Scales, Chief Executive of Merseytravel; Paul Holme, Skills Director of LSC North West; and Peter Keith, Training Manager for Walkers Snacks Foods.

The conference aims to address other vital issues in the SfL debate: How should the whole organisation approach be implemented? Why should employers get involved and how is this to be encouraged? What strategies should providers adopt? What will be the impact of new initiatives like the National Employer Training Programme and emerging key stakeholders like the Sector Skills Councils?

There will, over the two days, be 11 workshops, covering such topics as the embedding of SfL in the workplace, access to workforce learning, the role of the Sector Skills Councils, the role of union learning reps, an update on the National Employer Training Programme, and how local government is putting the whole organisation approach into practice.

The conference will also see the launch of “Natural Allies”, a new DVD funded by Greater Merseyside LSC, which through interviews with employees and employers underlines the importance of investing in Skills for Life training. The presentation will be made by Frances Graham of Investors in People UK.

“One aspect of our national conference that participants find particularly useful is the chance to network with others in the field,” says Eddie Little. “We will also hold a marketplace where the latest publications and resources will be exhibited and for sale.”

The Network would like to thank its sponsors, without whose generosity it would have been impossible to hold the event, which will be held at The Radisson SAS Hotel, Liverpool. The Network’s sponsors are: the Employers Organisation, the Government Office for the North West, the Learning Skills Council, Merseytravel, NVQ, the Northwest Regional Development Agency, and the South East England Development Agency.

Registration for the conference can be done by downloading a form from the website (www.thenetwork.co.uk). Completed forms should be sent to Anne-Marie Mumford, The Network, County South, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YD.

Note to Editors:

Experts in the Skills for Life field are available for interview beforehand and on the day.

The Network – formerly known as the Workplace Basic Skills Network – is a national organisation based at Lancaster University. Founded in 1993, it supports Skills for Life, the government's adult language, literacy and numeracy strategy. It has five strategic aims: to provide specialist continuing professional development courses for teachers; to provide advice, guidance and consultancy services; to develop local, regional and national networking and partnership opportunities with key agencies; to influence and contribute to the formulation of national policy; and to be fully involved in research and evaluation within workplace language, literacy and numeracy.

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