



South Central

The Lifelong Learning Network  
for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire,  
Oxfordshire and Surrey

A background image of a landscape with rolling hills and a field, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue rectangle. The text is centered within this rectangle.

# Annual Report Year 2

December 2008 to November 2009



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Report compiled by Dr Emma Thomas  
Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, Progress South Central

# Foreword

Professor Rob Robson, Chair, Progress South Central Executive Board

*We now have a secure and solid foundation to continue until July 2011, even in these challenging times.*

I am delighted to see this second Annual Report on the work of Progress South Central Lifelong Learning Network. As Chair of Progress South Central's Executive Board, I have watched this initiative grow from tentative beginnings to a well established collaborative partnership. This diverse network, spread over a wide region, is delivering a considerable range and volume of activity in this its second year of fully funded delivery. This report, as with last year's, illustrates the variety and extent of work developed and delivered across the network. It represents the tremendous amount of work done by the Progress South Central team and all the partners.

We now have a secure and solid foundation to continue until July 2011, even in these challenging times. The project reports and testimonies included in this report show that Progress South Central is making a real difference on the ground to individuals and groups of students – both now and for the future. The task of embedding and sustaining the most promising and effective strands of the work that Progress South Central is doing is clearly well in hand against the day when HEFCE funding for the Network comes to an end.

If you would like to know more, or to develop some work with us, please do get in touch with the team.



Below: The Progress South Central team. L to R: Jude Brindley, Fay Croft, Paul Gallagher, Ann Stainton, Debby Holmes, Emma Thomas, Godfrey Smith, Janet Cox, Catherine Falkner-Lyne



# Progress South Central: the second year

Fay Croft, Director, Progress South Central

Progress South Central has gone from strength to strength in our second full year of funded activity. We have an established and experienced core team, and secure and established relationships with a wide range of staff in our partner universities and colleges and in other related organisations. We were disappointed that HEFCE was unable to consider our bid for additional student places, along with many other partnerships and universities, due to the restrictions imposed on expected student numbers. However, our secure foundation has enabled us to develop and implement a wide-ranging programme of work, some of which is illustrated in this second Annual Report. We have taken the opportunity offered by HEFCE to re-profile our budget to enable continuation of the LLN until July 2011. This will give us more opportunity to embed the work we are doing for the long term benefit of current and future students.

Particular highlights for me this year have been the embedding of workforce development in Health and Social Care, the successful Experience Days at Bucks New University, the events we have sponsored for students and staff in the land-based sector, the launch of our 14–19 Diploma Progression Programme and our 'PPP' conference at Dorney Lake in July. We are grateful for the continuing support of our partners and for the interest and engagement of other organisations working on related agendas.

While Progress South Central is primarily a provider-facing Lifelong Learning Network, we never lose sight of our core beneficiaries. This year, our Annual Report features a number of 'case studies' from learners (and past learners) on vocational programmes at Progress South Central's partner institutions who have given their time to talk to us about their experiences of education and their HE journey. We include them here to serve as real-life examples of vocational progression, often in the face of challenges.

Our priorities for 2009–10 include:

- continuing and enhancing our established programmes in our four vocational sectors (Health and Social Care, Creative Industries, Land-based Industries and Construction);
- expanding our contributions to a wide range of information, advice and guidance on the potential for progression to HE, from supporting quality in admissions to HE in FE colleges to running sessions explaining Foundation degrees to school teachers, and much more;
- implementing our programme of support for 14–19 Diplomas as progression routes to HE and negotiating relevant higher level learning and progression for Apprentices.

In addition, we will ensure that the research, results and good practice we have developed are disseminated as widely and effectively as possible.

We are already looking at how the work of Progress South Central will be sustained beyond July 2011. Our legacy will include changes in culture and practice in our partners and specifics such as new programmes that have been developed, as well as the new relationships and smaller partnerships that we have brokered.



Aylesbury College sign a new progression agreement with Bucks New University. Pictured are Sarah Newall, Deputy Director of Teaching and Learning, Aylesbury College and Pauline Odulinski, Principal, Aylesbury College and member of Progress South Central Executive Board.





# About Progress South Central

## Vision and objectives of Progress South Central

Progress South Central is a Lifelong Learning Network that focuses on the needs of the learner and the employer, encompasses a breadth of provision and mission within its partner institutions, represents the voices of Further and Higher Education equally, and delivers clear benefits to the region that could not be achieved by individual institutions.

It seeks primarily to:

- address those barriers to progression from vocational Further Education into and within Higher Education that might be removed by a better understanding of, and greater responsiveness to, the needs of learners and employers, and improved communication and co-operation between institutions in the region;
- support institutions in the region to design and deliver provision which meets the needs of both learners and employers in the context of lifelong learning, through the sharing of effective and innovative practice, the brokering of relationships with regional partners, and the provision of opportunities for development.

## Wider context

### *The Leitch Review of Skills*

The raison d'être of Progress South Central, in common with all Lifelong Learning Networks, is to contribute to the challenging target of at least 40% of UK adults qualified to Level 4 and above by 2020, set as a result of the Leitch Review of Skills. In their work with and for vocational learners, and with employers, LLNs acknowledge that the bulk of work necessary to achieve this will have to be done in the context of the current workforce and of 'non-traditional' learners. At a regional level, Progress South Central is working in the context of the Regional Economic Strategy for the South East, which has committed to increasing the percentage of working age individuals in the region with qualifications at Level 4 and above from 28% in 2003 to at least 40% in 2016.

### *Need to demonstrate additionality*

As with all government initiatives, there is a need to focus on value for money and to demonstrate impact. The concept of additionality – what the LLN has added that would not have happened if it had never existed – was identified early on as a core concept for LLNs. Additionality can be seen through

increases in numbers of working age individuals in the region entering vocational HE, increases in numbers of progression routes and, equally importantly but less easily measurable, through the LLN's brokerage activity, including partnerships generated through the LLN's interventions and efforts in 'bringing people together'.

### *Need for realism*

While there is a necessary focus on measurables, there is also a need to consider the 'wider picture' and to take a broader view of the effectiveness of the LLN as a project. It is also necessary to be realistic about what is achievable within the funding period and to understand that the overall drive – to increase participation in HE – is a large-scale and long-term endeavour.

## Themes for judging the impact of the Lifelong Learning Network

Progress South Central's Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy focuses on three key themes: Provision, Progression and Partnership. They are overarching themes which underpin all the work carried out by the Network and in themselves define what the Network 'is about'.

*As with all government initiatives, there is a need to focus on value for money and to demonstrate impact*

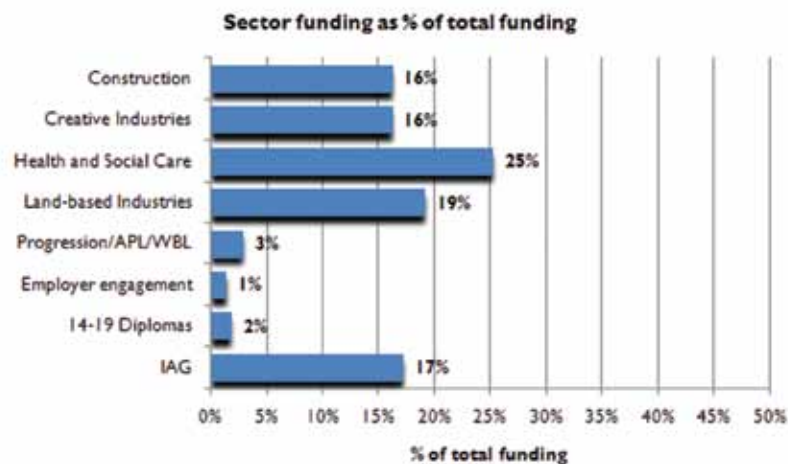
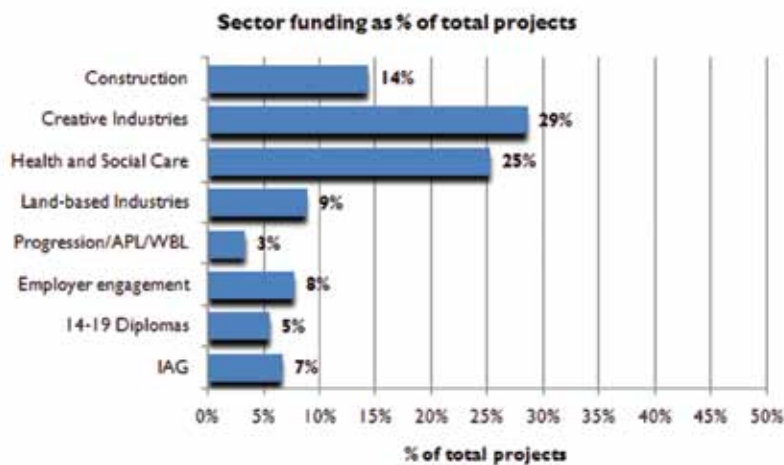


# Key facts and figures

## Project funding across sectors

The following table summarises projects funded from specific sector budgets as at early 2010. The summary includes funding committed for 2009–10.

Sector	Number of funded projects	Funding paid and committed
Construction	13	£77,903.16
Creative Industries	26	£77,862.25
Health and Social Care	23	£121,185.70
Land-based Industries	8	£91,948.30
Progression/APL/Work-based learning	3	£13,630.00
Employer engagement	7	£6,528.00
14–19 Diplomas	5	£8,500.00
IAG	6	£82,528.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>£480,086.16</b>



## Distribution of development funding<sup>1</sup>

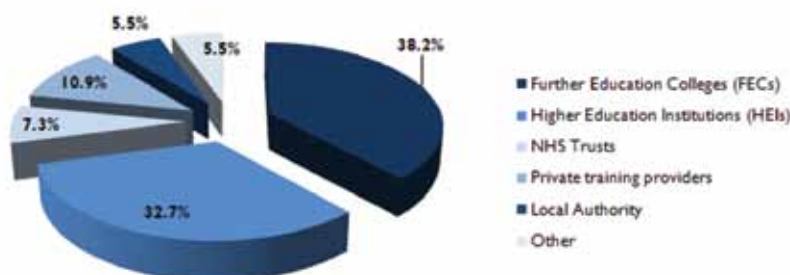
Progress South Central received a total of **88** development project proposals from four rounds of development funding between May 2008 and November 2009. **55** were funded at a total of almost £400,000 of agreed funding. Overall, **63%** of received proposals were funded.

Funding round	Date	Number of proposals received	Number of proposals funded <sup>2</sup>	Amount of funding agreed
First Steps Fund 1 <sup>3</sup>	May-08	26	15	£148,307
2009 New Year Fund: Targeting Social Care	Mar-09	9	8	£34,227
First Steps Fund 2	Jun-09	25	17	£154,096
Creative Industries Special Projects (CRISP) Fund	Nov-09	28	15	£58,750

The following **26** organisations received development funding from Progress South Central in these four development rounds:

Abingdon & Witney College	Moving Ambition Ltd
Academy of Contemporary Music	New Directions, Reading Borough Council
Amersham & Wycombe College	Oxford Brookes University
Aylesbury College	Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
Basingstoke College of Technology	University of Reading (Institute of Education)
Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Ruskin College
Bracknell & Wokingham College	Slough Borough Council
Brooklands College	Swindon College
Bucks New University	Surrey Education Business Partnership (Surrey SATRO)
Creative Bucks	Surrey and Borders NHS Foundation Trust
Dynamic Training UK Ltd	Thames Valley University
East Berkshire College	Thamesmead School, Shepperton
Guildford College	
The Learning Ladder Ltd	

Funded development projects, by type of lead organisation



<sup>1</sup> This relates to funding distributed as part of the four formal funding rounds summarised below. It does not include funding agreed outside of these funding rounds, nor does it include work in the land-based sector as this was subcontracted in its entirety to the University of Reading in 2008–09.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to bids submitted through the relevant funding round that were successful in receiving funding. In some cases, they were funded through the relevant sector budget – for example, Creative Industries – rather than through the First Steps Fund budget.

<sup>3</sup> The First Steps Funds are development funds to support emerging ideas and proposals from across the partnership.

## Curriculum development

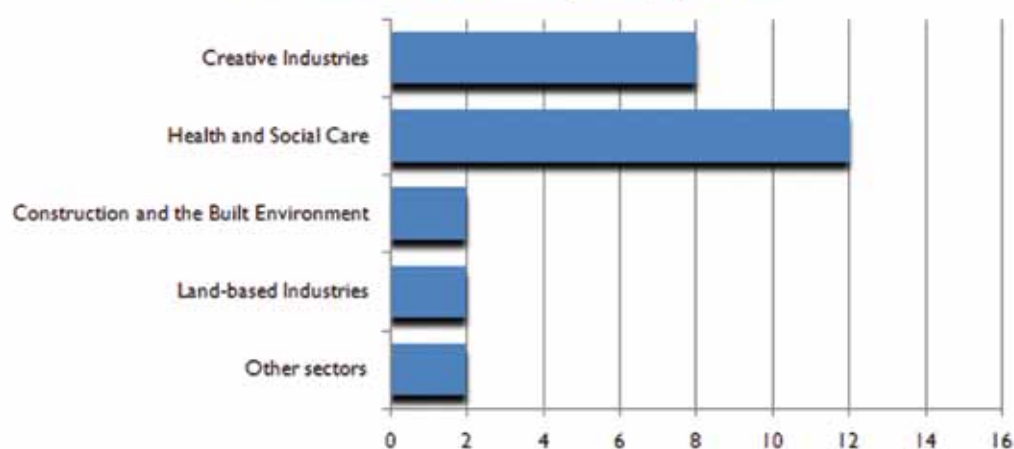
As at the end of Year 2, over £120,000 has been either paid or pledged by Progress South Central to support vocational curriculum development at our partner institutions.

Type of provision	Number of projects	% of total
Foundation degree development	14	53.8%
BA/BSc Honours top-ups	3	11.5%
Bespoke provision for NHS and other healthcare staff	6	23.1%
14–19 Diploma provision	1	3.8%
Other	2	7.7%
<b>Total projects</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The following **15** organisations have received funding from Progress South Central to assist with the development of new provision:

Abingdon & Witney College  
 Amersham & Wycombe College  
 Aylesbury College  
 Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust  
 Bucks New University  
 Dynamic Training UK Ltd  
 NHS Education South Central (NESC)  
 Oxford & Cherwell Valley College  
 Oxford Brookes University  
 Ruskin College  
 Strode's College  
 Surrey & Borders NHS Foundation Trust  
 Surrey Education Business Partnership (Surrey SATRO)  
 Swindon College  
 University of Surrey

**Funded curriculum development, by sector**



## Progression agreements

Progress South Central only sets up progression agreements where they will be meaningful and provide real added value. As at early 2010:

- 26** progression agreements have been signed, involving potentially over **400** possible progression routes
- 16** further agreements are currently in draft

Types of entry courses for which Progress South Central has signed progression agreements:

At Level 3:                                    BTEC National Award/Certificate/Diploma  
A-level

At Level 4 and above:                    Higher National Certificate (HNC)  
Higher National Diploma (HND)  
Foundation degree

These lead in most cases to BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons) degrees.

Progression agreements have been signed with the following **15** institutions:

Abingdon & Witney College  
Aylesbury College  
BCA (Berkshire College of Agriculture)  
Bucks New University  
Farnborough College of Technology  
Guildford College  
North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot)  
Oxford Brookes University  
Oxford & Cherwell Valley College  
University of Reading  
Ruskin College  
South Central Ambulance Trust  
Strode's College  
University of Surrey  
Uxbridge College



Professor Derek Godfrey, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Bucks New University and member of Progress South Central Executive Board, signs a new progression agreement between Aylesbury College and Bucks New University



# Provision

## **Our approach to curriculum development**

### *Foundation degree development to date*

Progress South Central's early funded work in curriculum development focused substantially on Foundation degrees, mainly in the Creative Industries and Health and Social Care sectors. All but two of the Foundation degrees developed so far have been new courses developed in response to an identified gap in the market, and in most cases employer engagement has played a part in the development. A new Foundation degree in Radio Production, now validated, was designed to provide students with hands-on experience of radio production and involved substantial employer engagement at the development stages, initially brokered by Progress South Central's Development Manager (Creative Industries). The Foundation degree in Writing for Performance, being delivered at Ruskin College, involved the Pegasus Theatre, Oxford Playhouse, Writers in Prison and the Apples and Snakes performance poetry organisation in its development. A new Foundation degree in Construction Management is now validated and professionally accredited with the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB).

### *Targeted development in Health and Social Care*

Development in the Health and Social Care sector has been characterised by strong partnership working with NHS Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and Sector Skills Councils and the development of specific, tailored provision to fill identified needs. The new Foundation degree in Health and Social Care practice at the University of Surrey is in response to the need for an HE qualification for the emerging Assistant Practitioner role. An existing Foundation degree in Health and Social Care at Oxford Brookes University has been further developed to better meet the needs of local employers in the Health and Social Care sectors. Another project consulted with local employers and Sector Skills Councils to determine the need for a Foundation degree relevant to those entering or currently working in youth work or social care settings. Work commissioned by NHS South Central SHA to look at education and training needs of all non-registered staff in bands 1-4 will lead to a CPD framework and the development of an appropriate curriculum; the final element will be to develop a brief for education commissioners in terms of key principles and a strategy that will inform education commissioning for this important part of the healthcare workforce.

### *Future curriculum development work*

While continuing to support the development of new Foundation degrees where a market is identified, we are likely to become increasingly involved in smaller-scale CPD provision, tailored to those in the workplace. The University of Surrey is leading for us on a project to develop bespoke models for CPD design and delivery to support best practice in flexible provision and progression in the workplace. We will be seeking to align this with the HEFCE-funded employer engagement project to deliver co-funded employer engagement with Oxford Brookes University. In Health and Social Care, we are considering CPD to support the development of workers engaged in the delivery of the National Dementia Strategy. We are looking at current and potential provision for those following an apprenticeship route, to try to establish higher level provision for students with potential. We have recently signed an agreement with Swindon College to produce bespoke progression opportunities in the form of work-based BA/BSc top-up years for their Foundation degree in Business Management and Communications and the Foundation degree in Classroom Support, particularly for students who have indicated a wish to study locally and remain at the college.

Impact on best practice in development and delivery is likely to form part of the long-term legacy of the LLN.

## Overview of curriculum development projects funded by Progress South Central

The following is a summary of those curriculum development projects to which Progress South Central has contributed funding as at the end of Year 2. These projects are in varying stages of completion depending on when they were agreed.

Project	Lead partner	Funding agreed
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Construction Management</b> Developed to meet the needs of the construction industry in North Bucks. Now fully accredited with the CIOB.	Aylesbury College	Mar 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Musical Theatre</b> One strand of a process of development of a portfolio of several Foundation degrees as part of a refocusing of the College's Performing Arts provision. This Fd also stemmed from the need to develop a more vocational training ground for hopeful future performers.	Amersham & Wycombe College	Mar 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Acting for New Media</b> One strand of a process of development of a portfolio of several Foundation degrees as part of a refocusing of the College's Performing Arts provision.	Amersham & Wycombe College	Mar 2008
<b>Top-up degree in Practice Development</b> Creation of a progression route for students enrolled on Foundation degrees in Care Management, Early Years Care, Community Development and other Level 5 awards in the care and education sectors in the region.	Bucks New University	Mar 2008
<b>Scoping research for a proposed Foundation degree in Amenity Horticulture</b> Feasibility study looking at demand for a new Foundation degree.	Abingdon & Witney College	Apr 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Radio Production</b> Created as an addition to Amersham and Wycombe College's portfolio of Media courses at HE level.	Amersham & Wycombe College	Jul 2008
<b>Developing links to HE study from Building Services Engineering qualifications delivered in schools</b> To include the creation of the first Building Services Engineering 14–19 Diploma at Level 2.	Surrey SATRO	Jul 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Publishing</b> Creation of new Foundation degree expected to be the only one of its type validated in the South East.	Oxford & Cherwell Valley College	Aug 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Costume and Fashion</b> Feasibility study and development of course content.	Amersham & Wycombe College	Aug 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Writing for Performance</b> Creation of a Foundation degree in vocational creative writing, validated by Open University Validation Services (OUVS).	Ruskin College	Sep 2008
<b>Extending Opportunities – Level 0 as a first step</b> Development of a Level 0 business studies programme to facilitate access to degree programmes.	Bucks New University	Sep 2008
<b>Development of a Foundation degree in Health and Social Care practice</b> Response to the need to have an HE qualification for the emerging Assistant Practitioner role.	University of Surrey	Oct 2008
<b>Report on the development of Work-based Learning for the Foundation degree in Health and Social Care</b> Following the development of work-based learning modules for this Fd.	Oxford Brookes University	Nov 2008
<b>Support for work-based learning: a package for work-based mentors of Fd students in the Health and Social Care sector</b> Development of an audit tool and a 15-credit module 'An Introduction to Enabling Learning and Mentoring'.	Bucks New University	Nov 2008

Project	Lead partner	Funding agreed
<p><b>Development of a framework for future Health and Social Care Foundation degrees</b></p> <p>Aimed to develop the existing Fd Health and Social Care to better meet the needs of local employers in the NHS and social care sectors and to research the potential demand for further Fds in healthcare.</p>	Oxford Brookes University	Nov 2008
<p><b>Valuing the Support Worker Role – Care, Commitment, Development</b></p> <p>Development of a new award for mental health support workers within the Trust. Now forms part of the innovative tailor-made 'Aspire' programme.</p>	Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Jan 2009
<p><b>CPD framework for NHS Bands 1–4</b></p> <p>Development of a CPD framework for staff employed in Bands 1–4 that will provide a coherent and integrated structure to facilitate career progression within NHS South Central SHA.</p>	NHS Education South Central (NESC)	Mar 2009
<p><b>Scoping research for Creative Arts Access/Foundation degree qualifications</b></p> <p>Identification of suitable opportunities for curriculum development evidenced by student and industry demand.</p>	Strode's College	Mar 2009
<p><b>BSc top-up in Animal Biology and Conservation</b></p> <p>Development of a specialist progression route for students completing Level 4/5 provision in Animal Management subjects, to include content on the latest legislative protocols in conservation practices.</p>	Oxford Brookes University	May 2009
<p><b>Developing Professional Youth Work/Social Work Practice</b></p> <p>Investigation into a possible Foundation degree relevant to those entering or currently working in youth work or social care settings.</p>	Oxford & Cherwell Valley College	May 2009
<p><b>Development of a Foundation degree in Popular Music</b></p> <p>Feasibility study including exploration of the different modes of employer engagement among young musicians.</p>	Oxford Brookes University	Jun 2009
<p><b>Mental Health Common Induction Standards</b></p> <p>Production of workbooks that meet the required learning outcomes of the Introductory Award Level 2, developed as part of the Aspire programme for mental health support workers.</p>	Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	Jul 2009
<p><b>Accredited CPD Level 4 module for the Work Health Trainer role</b></p> <p>Development of a Level 4 module to meet the needs of the new role of Work Health Trainer, as part of 'Slough Working Better'.</p>	Dynamic Training UK Ltd	Aug 2009
<p><b>Written Communication Skills</b></p> <p>Development of a flexible programme for Trust staff employed in Bands 1–4 who have an identified need for training in functional literacy to improve their written communication skills. Part of the programme will relate to academic writing skills to provide support to staff progressing onto Foundation degrees.</p>	Surrey & Borders NHS Foundation Trust	Oct 2009
<p><b>The development of accessible work-based progression opportunities</b></p> <p>Creation of bespoke work-based BA/BSc top-up years, particularly to meet the needs of students who wish to study locally.</p>	Swindon College	Oct 2009
<p><b>Domiciliary Care Services Progression Pathway</b></p> <p>Development and accreditation of a progression pathway from induction to HE for the Domiciliary Care Sector.</p>	Dynamic Training UK Ltd	Oct 2009

## Funded CPD provision as part of 'Slough Working Better'

Through the Health and Social Care strand, we have provided funding to support the development of the new role of Work Health Trainer, part of the 'Slough Working Better' project. 'Slough Working Better' is one of ten Advancement Network Prototypes across England being used to shape the new adult advancement and careers service. The health 'test bed' represents a major opportunity to implement the aspirations of key national initiatives including pathways to work, fit for work pilots and compulsory health assessments for ESA (Employment and Support Allowance) claimants.

The innovative role of 'Work Health Trainer' will provide an integrated service between employment and health services to facilitate early intervention and to provide help and support to individuals, enabling them to better manage their health and wellbeing with a view to returning to work or sustaining meaningful activity. The Work Health Trainers operate from GP surgeries and take referrals from organisations such as Shaw Trust, thereby forming a new trial outlet for careers information and advice in Slough.

Our project supported partners to develop and accredit a CPD Level 4 module as a necessary resource to train current health professional employees of East Berkshire Primary Care Trust to become Work Health Trainers. The training for this specialist role develops the skills and knowledge necessary to understand the barriers to learning and work faced by those with ill health. The Level 4 Work Health Trainer module forms part of a larger Progression Pathway that leads from Level 1 (Health Activist) through to Level 7.

The local MP, Fiona Mactaggart, expressed her support for the Advancement Network Prototype developments in Slough and the Department for

Business, Innovation and Skills will incorporate the most successful elements into the new adult advancement and careers service, operational from August 2010.

### Slough Working Better

[www.sloughworkingbetter.com](http://www.sloughworkingbetter.com)

#### CASE STUDY:

#### Josephine Hanney, Stop Smoking Advisor



Josephine has been part of the Work Health Trainer pilot project.

After leaving school, she studied Speech and Language Therapy at college but, although she completed the course, due to family circumstances didn't get her licence to practise. After a few years as a stay-at-home mum, Josephine was encouraged by a friend to help out at a local swimming class. She enjoyed teaching and through this identified a need for health training, which led to her becoming a Health Activist. She undertook several training courses including Smoking Cessation Advisor Level 2, Open College Network Health Trainer Level 3 and City and Guilds Health Trainer Level 3 and now works as a part-time Stop Smoking Advisor in East Berkshire.

When Josephine left school she thought higher education was something which had to be done there and then or you missed out. However, she now feels that education is something you can do at any age.

*'You should not be afraid to look in a different direction at any point in your career.'*

When asked what advice she would offer to other potential students she said *'it is important to get advice so you understand your strengths and weaknesses ... you should make the most of the range of support which is offered'*.

Josephine is looking forward to starting the new Work Health Trainer programme and hopes that it will develop her skills and open up more new and exciting opportunities.

November 2009



Andrew Avenell of East Berkshire PCT with Jaspal Singh, Josephine Hanney and Toni Goodliff, the work health trainers taking part in the pilot project

## CPD framework for staff employed in NHS Bands 1-4

A substantial project for the Health and Social Care strand this year was to support NHS South Central Strategic Health Authority to develop a Continuous Professional/Personal Development Framework for their staff working at NHS Bands 1 to 4, i.e. the non-regulated workforce. At a time of a changing labour market, extended competition and the need for ever greater cost efficiencies, the project was driven by the need to develop a workforce fit for purpose by addressing skills gaps.

Skills Academy for Health was commissioned to lead a scoping exercise across all 24 hospital and primary care trusts to explore the education and training offered to support staff working in roles that are not professionally regulated. The project covered staff in clinical and non-clinical jobs with a particular emphasis on the emerging Assistant Practitioner role. Working to a tight timescale, the project was completed in May 2009 and reported in July. In September, all trusts were invited to a workshop to understand the processes involved in planning and commissioning CPD and to develop action plans for implementation in their own trusts or job roles.

In November, NHS Education South Central presented the project and led a round-table discussion at our Health and Social Care Forum. The results will lead to a training needs analysis and ultimately a CPD framework for all support staff within the NHS South Central region, including the development of Apprenticeship programmes. The final element will be to develop a brief for education commissioners in terms of key principles and strategy that will inform education commissioning for this important part of the healthcare workforce.

The project has attracted a good deal of national interest, promoted not only by NHS South Central SHA but also through the activities of Skills Academy for Health.

### NHS South Central SHA

[www.southcentral.nhs.uk](http://www.southcentral.nhs.uk)

### Skills Academy for Health

[www.skillsacademyforhealth.org.uk](http://www.skillsacademyforhealth.org.uk)



## CASE STUDY:

### Douglas Phillips and Jonathan Kempzell, Foundation degree in Motorsports – Automotive and Performance Technology, Oxford & Cherwell Valley College



Doug completed a BTEC National Diploma at OCVV and decided to study the Foundation degree in Motorsports because he wanted the opportunity to study locally at the excellent facilities at OCVV's Bicester Performance Engineering Centre. This Foundation degree has been developed by OCVV and Oxford Brookes University in consultation with local motorsport employers in order to meet regional priorities for addressing skills shortages.

Doug feels there are many benefits to studying the Foundation degree. 'It helps your learning, as you can put what you are taught into practice immediately. The National Diploma students see us working on single-seater race cars and it is an incentive for them to work towards progressing to a Foundation degree.' Doug's aim is to become a race engineer for a leading Le Mans team and feels that undertaking a Foundation degree has been an important first step to achieving this goal.

Jonathan completed GCSEs and A-levels at school and then worked for eight years as the director of a security company. Because he felt he had been out of the education system for some time, Jonathan considered the Foundation degree a more personal option for learning. 'The personal tutor system and small class means that you get more out of the course.' He has been impressed with the course content which includes management and business-related units which follow industry requirements, as well as subject-specific units such as aerodynamics. 'I would recommend this course to anyone as you get a taste of everything related to the motorsport industry, whereas with other courses you have to specialise early and don't receive such a comprehensive background.'

After completing their Foundation degree, both Jonathan and Doug hope to progress onto the final year of a Bachelors degree at Oxford Brookes University.

April 2009

## University 'Experience Days' for prospective HE students

This year Progress South Central supported and funded four Experience Days at Bucks New University for students from local FE colleges. The Experience Days have been developed to give Level 3 vocational college students a realistic experience of what it is like to study in a university setting. Students also benefit from a variety of support activities throughout their application process to higher education. 98% of those feeding back felt that they now knew more about HE having attended the Experience Day, and over half stated that the day had 'definitely' helped them decide to go on to higher education.



Julie Giles, Lecturer in Graphic Design, Aylesbury College

Julie Giles, Lecturer in Graphic Design at Aylesbury College, said 'It was a very positive experience for the students and they really benefited from the day. Being able to view the undergraduates' work was inspirational and for some students helped to reinforce their decisions to apply to university and to gain the best possible grades they could. For one or two students the experience confirmed that university was not for them and has helped them focus on alternatives to higher education. I thought it was particularly valuable for the students to work with different people in a different environment and be aware of the links the university has with the creative industries. It has really helped to make university a less scary option. Personally, I was able to forge links with the university to develop future projects for the students to engage with. It was a worthwhile day for both students and tutors.'



Amy Gleaves, BTEC National Diploma in Art & Design (Photography & Graphics) at Aylesbury College

Amy Gleaves, a BTEC National Diploma student at Aylesbury College, chose to do the Graphic Design and Advertising workshop and wasn't sure what to expect. 'It was an amazing day and now I am sold on going to university. It was really great to be able to talk to the tutors. The Student Ambassador who accompanied us really helped us to feel comfortable and didn't gloss over the realities of university life. We were going to have to work hard to get the results we wanted. I thoroughly enjoyed the practical aspect of the day and getting real hands-on experience of a printing press.'



Kay-Marie Stroud, another Aylesbury College National Diploma student, was surprised at the variety of pathways available that she had not considered before. 'The tutors explained things really well and made me feel that getting a degree was attainable. I was worried about how I was going to afford to go to university but I now realise the opportunities a degree will bring me outweighs this. I would recommend the University Experience Day to anyone thinking about higher education; it will open your eyes to a new world of opportunity'.



Kay-Marie Stroud, BTEC National Diploma in Art & Design (Photography & Graphics) at Aylesbury College

**Aylesbury College** [www.aylesbury.ac.uk](http://www.aylesbury.ac.uk)

**Bucks New University** [www.bucks.ac.uk](http://www.bucks.ac.uk)

## Perspective from Susan Jones, Director of Enterprise, Bucks New University

'Progress South Central has provided invaluable support for Bucks New University's flagship project 'Open 4 Business: Practical Help in Tough Times'. In the last nine months 43 individuals who had identified skills gaps and training needs, many of whom were referred by Jobcentre Plus, have benefited from training through the programme. The team at Progress South Central have always been quick to grasp and exploit the synergies between their objectives and the range of related initiatives that have emerged, particularly to support individuals through the recession.'

### Open 4 Business

[www.open4businessbucks.com](http://www.open4businessbucks.com)



Susan Jones, Director of Enterprise, with Tom Harrison, Business Development Manager, Open 4 Business

### Perspective from Bob Cozens, Head of Recruitment, Bucks New University

With Progress South Central's support, work is underway to organise and deliver a 'Professionalising Admission to Higher Education in Further Education' conference for practitioners from the universities and their partner colleges within the network. The conference will feature keynote speakers from SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions) and UCAS followed by a variety of workshops focusing on different aspects of the HE admissions process.

The conference is the initiative of Bob Cozens, Head of Recruitment at Bucks New University. Bob says: 'Thanks to Progress South Central we now have the opportunity to work together with other HEIs and their partner colleges with the aim of enhancing the student application experience which in turn will impact upon recruitment, retention and progression to higher education. Further education colleagues will have access to admissions professionals from the higher education sector to address issues they experience within their own institutions. I am looking forward to a stimulating and informative conference.'

**Supporting Professionalism in Admissions** [www.spa.ac.uk](http://www.spa.ac.uk)



*The course has given me the tools that I need to make the breakthroughs necessary to make a difference.*

### Perspective from Alison Honour, Head of Department of Arts, School of Arts and Humanities, Oxford Brookes University

Oxford Brookes University's School of Arts and Humanities has received funding from Progress South Central's Creative Industries Special Projects (CRISP) fund to run a 'Creative Futures' conference at Oxford Brookes University, to raise awareness of the breadth of creative careers and employment opportunities within Art & Design. Alison Honour, Head of the Department of Arts, is project managing this event and says 'The Arts department at Oxford Brookes University is extremely pleased to be receiving funding and support from Progress South Central in order to develop our links with our partnership colleges and local schools. The event we will be running aims to inform learners of the range of undergraduate courses on offer to art and design applicants in the UK and will focus on the career and progression possibilities for graduates.'

### CASE STUDY:

#### Jan Eedle-Wells, Foundation degree in Community Development, Bucks New University



When we first spoke to Jan she was aged 60 and was studying for a work-based learning Foundation degree in Community Development at Bucks New University. Jan completed her Foundation degree in summer 2009.

Jan left school at 15 without any qualifications. She initially took over responsibility for running the family farm and later found work as a cashier. She married at 20 and had two children. After a divorce she found herself having to work to support her children and took on a variety of jobs that fitted in with her childcare responsibilities. She worked as a PA/manager in the upholstery manufacturing industry for seventeen years and a manager in insurance assessment for five years. For the last three years, Jan has worked for the Bucks Association for Blind and Partially Sighted People as the Volunteer Liaison Coordinator and Events Manager.

Although Jan developed many skills over the course of her career, she still lacked confidence because she did not have a formal qualification. Jan applied to university and, with the support of her employer, studied for the Foundation degree in Community Development, attending university for one half-day a week while working. Jan enjoyed sharing her work experiences and learning from others on her course. However, it wasn't always easy. Jan experienced some challenges in balancing studying, work and home life and there were also some funding issues to contend with. In spite of this, Jan says it has been worth it and has opened up a new world of work-related terminology and skills to her.

Jan says: 'I now realise how much better equipped I now am to integrate into the various communities. I understand the language of Community Development and can see where I need to be heading to be able to carry out my work more effectively within both new communities and that of my organisation. The course has given me the tools that I need to make the breakthroughs necessary to make a difference.'

November 2008

## CPD for partner college staff

### *Open Day for FE staff in the land-based sector*

In June 2009, 13 staff from local FE colleges with land-based interests attended a bespoke 'Open Day' at the University of Reading, funded by Progress South Central and organised by the University's School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. The purpose of the day was to build and extend links between the University of Reading and local partner FE colleges. Certificates of attendance were issued that enabled the staff to 'count' the day towards their CPD entitlement.

Staff were welcomed by Professor Richard Ellis, Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences, and were then taken on a tour that included a visit to the state-of-the-art Hopkins Building with its huge new lab that can accommodate well over 100 students, followed by a visit to the Harris Garden and the Cole Museum of Zoology. A presentation from Dr Chris Reynolds of the Animal Science Research Group led to some entertaining discussion of the effects on global warming of the methane gas produced by cows! The group was then taken on a tour of the University's Centre for Dairy Research, where they were told about the research being done with milk yields before being taken to the sheds to 'meet' the cows and then to see cows being milked using high-tech milking machinery. The day ended with a visit to the Museum of English Rural Life, where delegates were able to explore the museum and the facilities on offer for student groups.

Feedback from the staff was positive, with one delegate commenting 'I really enjoyed the day. It was all really interesting. Very worthwhile.' The 'Open Day' idea will be extended over the coming academic year as part of Progress South Central's continuing work in the land-based sector, with the development of a training network for college staff working in the land-based sector across the LLN's 'patch'.

**University of Reading School of Agriculture, Policy and Development** [www.reading.ac.uk/apd](http://www.reading.ac.uk/apd)

### *Research into the CPD needs of staff delivering HE in FE*

We recently invited staff involved in the delivery of HE at our partner colleges to complete a questionnaire aimed at assessing demand for professional development to support excellence in the delivery of, and support for, HE in FE Colleges. Fifty-six responses were received, from 16 of Progress South Central's 22 partner colleges. Over half the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with the amount of opportunity they had to access CPD. Most respondents indicated that they had undertaken some form of CPD relevant to their HE role. In terms of what kinds of CPD staff would like to be able to take advantage of, the most popularly-chosen options were the opportunity



Off on the campus tour!



Looking around the Cole Museum of Zoology



Meeting the cows at the Centre for Dairy Research!

to update their subject knowledge and more opportunity for scholarly activity such as personal research. Having time allocated within work time for CPD was rated as by far the most important factor that would make a difference. Results of this survey will be made available to partners in due course and the intention is for them to provide the basis for plans for future funded support from Progress South Central for the delivery of HE in FE.



# Progression

## New progression agreements in the Creative Industries sector

This year has seen the signing of the first progression agreements between Strode's College and Bucks New University. The approach that we are taking to progression agreements stresses a 'quality over quantity' approach and ensures that progression agreements are only set up where they will provide real added value and prove a meaningful aid to progression. The agreements signed offer a range of activities to help prepare students for higher education. It is hoped that by raising awareness and developing appropriate skills, students will be able to prepare thoroughly for higher education and will as a consequence be better equipped to perform well during the application and selection process.

The progression agreements are targeted at Strode's College students following BTEC National or A-level programmes in Performing Arts, Music, Media and Art & Design wanting to progress to a variety of BA (Hons) programmes at Bucks New University, including BA (Hons) Textiles, Digital Animation, Film & TV Production and Product Design. Students will participate in workshops at Bucks New University and will receive additional guidance in preparation for their progression to higher education.

We believe the progression agreement model used is versatile and adaptable to various curriculum areas and could also promote internal progression where HE is offered in a further education college.

**Strode's College** [www.strodes.ac.uk](http://www.strodes.ac.uk)



Above: The signing of the first progression agreement between Strode's College and Bucks New University, in October 2009, by Frank Botham, Principal, Strode's College and Ruth Gunstone, Director of Student Experience, Bucks New University



## Perspective from Emily Millington, Subject Tutor (Dance), Strode's College



During Year 2, Progress South Central has been pleased to sponsor two one-day events for students at Strode's College. The first event, *Entrepreneurial and Business Skills for the Performing Arts*, provided 30 students with the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills within the areas of finance, marketing and business planning for the Performing Arts industry. The second event was an Experience Day for Art & Design students, which aimed to raise students' awareness of progression routes and careers within art and design and gave them the chance to participate in workshops led by professional artists.

Selected student feedback:

*'I learnt a hell of a lot today with regards to education and progressing as well as techniques'*

Emily Millington, Subject Tutor at Strode's College, organised these events and says 'These events have been a great opportunity for our students to explore career options and experience working with practitioners from the industry. Strode's College have enjoyed working with Progress South Central on a number of diverse and challenging projects. They have facilitated the development of working relationships with HEIs and employers alike whilst providing support for students to gain insights into careers and opportunities within the creative industries.'

*'I learnt a hell of a lot today with regards to education and progressing as well as techniques'*



### Support for students in the land-based sector

Delivery in the land-based sector is being led by the University of Reading. During Year 2, there has been a strong commitment to progression agreements and to liaison with local Further Education Colleges offering land-based provision.

#### **Progression Agreements**

Work on progression agreements has included the setting up of a number of agreements that aim to clarify entry requirements and what learners can expect in terms of transparency of admissions procedures and parity of consideration. The model developed is based on one already in use by VETNET and involves identifying specified components of the 'sending' qualification(s) that learners must demonstrate in order to be considered for progression to a specific 'receiving' qualification. Agreements signed so far have involved progression from specified BTEC National Diploma and HND courses in Animal Management and Horse Management to the BSc (Hons) Animal Science at the University of Reading and to the Foundation degree in Animal Behaviour and Welfare at BCA.

#### **Research Skills School**

In May, the University of Reading hosted a pilot Research Skills School for six high-achieving BTEC National Diploma students from BCA. The aim was to give the students a chance to experience a university setting and learn about research being carried out at the University of Reading. The Research Skills School was run by Dr Jennie Litten-Brown and Becky Morgan of the Animal Science

Research Group with the assistance of two student ambassadors. The three-day event included a visit to the University's Centre for Dairy Research to see some of the research being carried out by the Animal Science Research Group and a visit to the Cotswold Wildlife Park where the students had the chance to carry out an animal behaviour study. Feedback from students was very positive and it is expected that an extended version of the event will run again next year.

*'Enjoyed it very much and a very good insight into uni life'*

*'Really good fun, would definitely recommend it'*

*'Behaviour studies at the zoo were amazing and really had to use our skills'*

(Feedback from students on the Research Skills School)

#### **Learning Materials**

A DVD of learning materials for Animal Science students has been developed and distributed to Progress South Central's partner colleges with land-based interests. The DVD includes an animal behaviour teaching guide with video clips and a molarity calculations lecture. In designing the DVD, Jennie and Becky talked to students at all levels to ask what they found most difficult about their courses. Much of the material for the DVD has been successfully trialled with students. It is hoped to build on this project in 2009–10 by making more online resources available.

**University of Reading School of Agriculture, Policy and Development** [www.reading.ac.uk/apd](http://www.reading.ac.uk/apd)

**VETNET LLN** [www.vetnetlln.ac.uk](http://www.vetnetlln.ac.uk)

## Perspective from Becky Morgan, Research Officer, University of Reading School of Agriculture, Policy and Development



Becky Morgan is a Research Officer in the Animal Science Research Group at the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. She was formerly a secondary school biology teacher. Her previous work in animal nutrition has included working with animal feeds in systems in the lab which mimic the gut of cows and sheep, and analysing the fatty acid composition of cow's milk which has been altered to benefit human health. Becky has also published work on milk consumption and the risk of prostate cancer and lectures on cat and dog nutrition.

Over the last year Becky has been allocating most of her time to working as Progress South Central's Land-based Research Officer, which has involved brokering Progression Agreements with Progress South Central's partner colleges, organising and facilitating a successful Research Skills School for land-based FE students and an Open Day for local land-based FE staff and producing a DVD of learning materials for land-based students.

Becky says 'My background in teaching and experience as a research scientist have come together for this work with Progress South Central. I have enjoyed working with the partner colleges, organising events and producing learning materials for use in HE and FE. It is so important that students are given opportunities to reach their full potential, whichever route through education they choose, and I hope that this work will play a part in that. I am pleased to be working with Dr Jennie Litten-Brown who is heading up the future land-based work for Progress South Central so that we can continue to develop ideas and build on what has already been achieved'.

## Summer residential event for land-based students

In July 2009 Progress South Central sponsored a three-day Residential Progression Programme for school and FE students thinking of studying HE courses in the land-based sector. The event was organised and run by the University of Reading's Widening Participation Office, as part of a wider programme of residential events aimed at giving young people from non-traditional backgrounds a taste of higher education.

16 students studying land-based subjects at Level 3 had the chance to spend a week at the University of Reading, experiencing university life both from an academic and social point of view. The students enjoyed the chance to try a range of land-based taster sessions enabling them to find out more about the courses they might wish to study after school or college. Current students at the university acted as mentors for the participants, guiding them through

the week and answering their questions about higher education.

Not all the time was spent working. The students stayed in Halls of Residence and had the chance to socialise and relax with other students from a range of schools and colleges. Activities laid on included a film evening, a bowling night and a visit to Beale Park, a local animal farm and wildlife park. To round the week off, the students worked together to produce a promotional presentation demonstrating some of the skills they had learnt over the week and all participants were presented with a certificate to acknowledge their efforts. Almost all the students indicated that the event had been some help to them in reaching a decision to go on to HE.

*'I had a really good time.'*

*'The mentors were really friendly, helpful and fun.'*

(Feedback from students on the land-based Residential Progression Programme)





## Learning Opportunities in the South East

Progress South Central committed £40,000 in 2008–09 to the **Learning Opportunities in the South East** project. This important cross-regional initiative is producing information, advice and guidance to support higher education vocational curriculum development and progression across nine counties. The Learning Opportunities website, including the two interactive tools **Foundation degrees in the South East** and **Southeast Routes**, is now live and providing a 'one stop shop' for learners who know little or nothing about higher education. During the year February 2009 to February 2010, the Learning Opportunities website received 7516 visits, evenly split between new visitors and returners to the site.

The website is being complemented by a booklet for each LLN's area, a CD guide 'How to get the best from Learning Opportunities' and an adviser's pack, as well as a range of marketing materials. Along with the three other LLNs in the South East, the Progress South Central team are actively marketing Learning Opportunities in their contacts with partners and interested colleagues.

At the annual National Career Awards presentations in Blackpool in November 2009, Learning Opportunities in the South East was the outright winner in the category 'Working with Adults'. In addition, Director Maureen Haywood received a 'Highly Commended' award in the category 'Careers Practitioner of the Year 2009'.

### Learning Opportunities in the South East

<http://www.learning-opportunities.org.uk>



## Perspective from Maureen Haywood, Director, Learning Opportunities in the South East

'Learning Opportunities in the South East has valued the support it has received from all four of the South East LLNs. Learning Opportunities has grown into a valuable resource for everyone across the nine counties in the South East, both learners and advisers, interested in higher level education, skills and careers.'

## 14–19 Diploma Progression Programme

Based on scoping work carried out in 2009, Progress South Central is putting in place a comprehensive programme of involvement with 14–19 Diplomas in our region with a specific focus on progression to HE. The Diploma Progression Programme for 2009–10 was drawn up as a result of a series of consultations over several months, beginning with a round table discussion in July with a range of stakeholders (including representatives from the HEIs, Aimhigher, FECs, Surrey Education Business Partnership and 14–19 co-ordinator leads). This will support the development and delivery of 14–19 Diplomas as potential routes to higher education across our network. Resources currently available on our website include a spreadsheet detailing which Diploma lines are running where and contact details for the consortia leads as well as information on Diploma entry criteria, including additional specialist learning requirements within our partner HEIs. Planned work in 2010 includes Higher Education Days for Diploma students to be delivered at two of our partner HEIs, invitations to events at universities for Diploma students, Diploma information sessions for admissions tutors, employer engagement events and a network wide dissemination event. We hope that this work will then lead on to the negotiation of progression agreements in 2010–11 to secure progression from Diplomas to degree-level study, and further research into how the Diploma Extended Projects could support progression to HE.

**Our 14–19 Diploma resources** [www.progresssouthcentral.org.uk/sectors/14-19-diplomas.html](http://www.progresssouthcentral.org.uk/sectors/14-19-diplomas.html)

## Creative Minds: Creative Futures

In February 2009, the Faculty of Creativity & Culture at Bucks New University hosted a one day conference 'Creative Minds: Creative Futures'. This event was intended to give students a 'taster' of how creative talents could be turned into creative careers, to raise the profile of arts-based careers and the need for creative graduates, to raise awareness of undergraduate opportunities and to look at new ways of working with technologies. The event included presentations by some influential and inspirational professionals, including inventor Trevor Baylis and presenter and songwriter Tom Robinson, and a panel that included Nik Powell, Director of the National Film Institute, Leslie Morris, Head of Design Skills at the Design Council, Yasmin Sidhwa, Head of Arts Education at Pegasus Theatre, Oxford and Mike McNally, a consultant working with bands and solo artists. There were also a number of workshops led by practitioners in different creative fields.

Over 200 FE and HE students attended. Of those who returned feedback, 90% rated the day as 'Excellent' or 'Good' and 88% felt more confident about finding a career in the creative industries. Feedback on the various workshops was positive – an attendee at 'Being a Successful Textile Designer' commented that the workshop had been 'very interesting and realistic' while an attendee at the 'Careers in Advertising' workshop had received 'amazingly helpful pointers and suggestions'. One delegate commented that what had inspired them the most about the day was seeing 'how people like me with a positive attitude and ambition can achieve anything'.

Selected feedback from delegates:

*'Great event;  
inspirational.'*

*'Really well thought out.'*

*'Trevor Baylis [is an]  
amazingly inspirational  
man.'*

*'[Tom Robinson's talk  
was] really really good.'*

A short promotional film, encapsulating key messages and responses from the conference, is now available online. The aim is to showcase work in the creative industries and the benefits of HE.

### CMCF: The Movie

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq7bqgWxv4U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vq7bqgWxv4U)



Inventor Trevor Baylis OBE gives the keynote 'Thinking outside the square'



The panel



Left: Tom Robinson, songwriter and BBC Radio 6 Music presenter

Below: Trevor Baylis with students



## CASE STUDY:

### Lauren Reeves, Foundation degree in Television Production, Amersham & Wycombe College

'When I left school I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I assumed I would just take the traditional route, mostly because I wasn't aware that there were alternatives available. After starting my AS-levels I realised that wasn't the route for me, and so I dropped out and went on to try a National Diploma in Multimedia at Basingstoke College of Technology. I found it to be more art-based at first than I had expected but one of the tutors persuaded me to keep going until the end of the first term. She was right and I really enjoyed it after that. When it came to moving on after my ND, the same teacher suggested that I might like a Foundation degree. She herself went to one of the open days at Amersham before recommending it to me, and the support she gave me really encouraged me to go for it. BCOT really helped us with our progression, setting time aside during the day for students to work on their UCAS applications and using it to contribute to our overall marks so we felt it was worthwhile.

Although getting to grips with the technical knowledge was a challenge, I really enjoy the Foundation degree, in particular what is known as 'intensives' where we get a programme brief at the beginning and have two weeks to develop our ideas and produce our project before we then show them to the rest of the group at the end of the two weeks as part of the assessment. Alongside my course I am a part-time runner for a TV channel. In TV you have to start from the bottom and work your way up, so I'm hoping that when I graduate, I will go on to do the BA top-up here at Amersham and then go straight into the industry as a trainee or onto an apprenticeship.

My advice to other students is to go and see a careers adviser, because making the right choice to begin with is really important, and if I hadn't had good teachers I might well have just walked away from my education after making the wrong choice.'

October 2008

**Basingstoke College of Technology** [www.bcot.ac.uk](http://www.bcot.ac.uk)

**Amersham & Wycombe College** [www.amersham.ac.uk](http://www.amersham.ac.uk)



## Raising Aspirations at East Berkshire College

East Berkshire College was able to increase the number of students progressing from Level 3 Health and Social Care programmes to higher education by 82% within one academic year through the 'Progression to Higher Education: Raising Aspirations in Vocational Areas' project funded by Progress South Central.

The project focused on developing a variety of activities to support students in their application to higher education. These included:

- Introduction sessions to UCAS applications
- One to one support with personal statements
- A drop in service offering additional help and guidance
- Tutorials on the benefits of volunteering and increasing experience, which led to several students taking up a variety of voluntary roles within the college

Staff are also better informed and able to advise students on the higher education application process after receiving training as part of the College's tutor conference. A tutor information pack was developed to support this. The higher education training programme has been so successful it is now offered as part of the cross-college staff development package.

East Berkshire College reported that with the funded support of Progress South Central the college was able to focus on helping Health and Social Care students to progress to higher education and to develop the resources to sustain this.

**East Berkshire College** [www.eastberks.ac.uk](http://www.eastberks.ac.uk)

East Berkshire College has campuses in both Windsor and Langley



*'My advice to other students is to go and see a careers adviser, because making the right choice to begin with is really important...'*



From left: Mentors Kirsty Harris, Shelly Coe, Keira Fines and Lucie Acraman, with mentoring scheme coordinator Ali Chandler

## Oxford Brookes Mentoring Scheme

Progress South Central is funding the first year of a mentoring scheme running at Oxford Brookes University. The mentoring scheme is being run alongside the Aimhigher Associates programme, with the goal of creating a sustainable model that could be used by Oxford Brookes in conjunction with local state schools in the future. The scheme is being delivered at Wheatley Park School in the first instance with the aim of possible expansion to include other local partner schools and colleges. It is hoped that closer and more informed partnerships between the University and local schools and colleges will be the result. In line with Progress South Central's objectives, the mentoring scheme coordinator Ali Chandler aims to increase learners' knowledge of the various options available to them in higher education, including vocational qualifications such as Foundation degrees and also bridging programmes.

Oxford Brookes have recruited and trained nine current undergraduate students to be mentors. In the next few months the mentors will visit the school regularly, discussing with individual learners options available at university, what to expect from higher education, how to set goals and offering general help with homework tasks. The scheme aims to assist Year 11 learners to achieve at least 5 A\*-Cs in their GCSEs. Targeted students will include those who are currently on a C-D borderline and need extra assistance to raise their performance, confidence in learning and knowledge of what is available within higher education.

## 'Mentoring for Progression': bringing the benefits of mentoring to non-traditional learners

Year 2 has seen the completion of a project engaging providers of work-based learning in the process of mentoring learners for progression. The project was run on behalf of Progress South Central by training and mentoring consultancy The Learning Ladder and worked with six providers: ATG Training, Training the Carer, Chiltern Training Ltd, Henley Training Company, Milton Keynes College and Slough Borough Council. Twelve staff from across the six providers underwent mentor training and subsequently each provided one-to-one mentoring support to a cohort of work-based learners who were felt to have the potential to benefit from higher education but who were not currently considering it. Mentors completed Personal Development Plans with their learners, identifying future goals for learning and progression and, where appropriate, action towards those goals.

Mentors reported that they enjoyed their role and in at least two cases the providers concerned are now including good practice from the Personal Development Plan approach in their learning programmes as a matter of procedure. These providers in particular value the personal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis, the KSA (Knowledge Skills and Attitude) exercise and the process of identifying short, medium and long-term goals.

Forty-six learners from a variety of vocational sectors were mentored and two-thirds subsequently indicated that they were likely to apply to HE. Mentors spoke positively of the contribution that mentoring is making to the way in which learners view their future learning. There is evidence that a significant proportion of learners are actively intending to engage in further, higher level learning following achievement of their Level 3 qualification, while others are likely to gain further qualifications at the same level in order to become NVQ assessors or work-based trainers.

### The Learning Ladder

[www.thelearningladder.co.uk](http://www.thelearningladder.co.uk)

Basingstoke  
College of  
Technology



## Research into school and FE college students' experiences and intentions

Year 2 saw the completion of two research projects funded by Progress South Central and run by the University of Reading's Institute of Education. The first, *An Investigation into the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provided for Year Eleven Students regarding their Post 16 Options*, aimed to research Year 11 students' attitudes to vocational education and training and progression. The second, *A Study of Students Studying Vocational Courses in Further Education*, looked at vocational students' experiences and their intentions with regard to pursuing higher education. Findings from this study have been disseminated via several conferences including the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Annual Conference in Manchester in September 2009. A complementary project is being funded in 2009–10 looking at the role and attitudes of secondary school staff in the provision of post-16 IAG.

**University of Reading Institute of Education**  
[www.reading.ac.uk/education](http://www.reading.ac.uk/education)

## CASE STUDY:

### Hayley Sach, Foundation degree in Working with Children and Young People, Bucks New University



When we spoke to Hayley she had just completed her first year of the Foundation degree in Working with Children and Young People. She had really enjoyed the course so far and gained an enormous amount of knowledge that had already helped her in her career as an Inclusive Officer at a secondary school in Buckinghamshire.

It was her employer who suggested Hayley should consider the Foundation degree. Hayley had not studied for a number of years and never at Level 4 but with the support of her employer, she enrolled on the course. The academic study was hard to begin with but Hayley had good support from her tutors and peers. The opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas with fellow students from different sectors had been valuable and relevant to her own study and work.

Hayley is pleased that she didn't go to university straight from college not knowing what she really wanted to do. Her advice is that it is better to wait until you are sure what you want to be and choose the right course for you.

## Perspective from Tony Macfadyen, Research Convenor 14–19 Research Group, The Institute of Education, University of Reading



'As Research Convenor for the 14-19 research group, I have worked closely with the Progress South Central team who are extremely well led and very organised, knowledgeable and motivated.

Progress South Central have been of enormous help to us in a number of important ways. Most notably, we have collaborated closely on three research projects to help young people with the Information, Advice and Guidance they receive. We believe this is a crucial area to increase students' chances of finding and staying on, a course that is appropriate to them, thus reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Furthermore, we believe this research is improving young peoples' opportunities to find alternative pathways into higher education.

Progress South Central have also helped, through their vast network of contacts, to put us in contact with other organisations such as schools. They have also helped us disseminate our work and, through some very well regarded conferences, have brought key players in the area together to share knowledge and good practice – this has been of real value to us. In the fast changing landscape of 14–19, Progress South Central have been a very important player in the region and our partnership with them has been both strong and worthwhile.'

*The opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas with fellow students from different sectors had been valuable and relevant to her own study and work.*

# Partnership

## 'PPP' Conference

In July 2009 Progress South Central held its first network-wide partnership conference *Partnership, Progression and Potential*. The aim of the conference was to celebrate and learn from the successes of the LLN's first eighteen months and to identify potential for development over the next two years. Forty delegates attended and spent an afternoon and evening in the pleasant surroundings of Dorney Lake. Dr Chris Baker, Head of Economic and Social Development at the University of Brighton and formerly Director of Sussex Learning Network, delivered a stimulating keynote speech on the rationale for, development and delivery of Lifelong Learning Networks and the potential that remains. There were presentations on current work with particular reference to developments in the Health and Social Care and Creative Industries sectors. There was an opportunity to view Learning Opportunities in the South East, the web-based information and advice service for adults in the workplace considering higher education (see page 20). After a buffet dinner, an inspirational graduate from the University of Reading described his unusual route to higher education. An Opportunity Analysis was undertaken to identify potential areas for development, and many of the ideas discussed will be delivered in 2009–0 and 2010–11.

## Perspective from Iain Wolloff, Vice Principal, Farnborough College of Technology and member of Progress South Central's Executive Board

'As a member of the original Development Group, I have represented the college sector in the Progress South Central partnership since the start. Partnership between FE and HE is critical to delivery of progression to higher level study for vocational students. Progress South Central provides real opportunities for college and university staff to work together to make that progression a reality.'



*'Progress South Central provides real opportunities for college and university staff to work together to make that progression a reality.'*

## CASE STUDY:

### Emma Eastham, BSc (Hons) Animal Science, University of Reading



After taking her GCSEs, Emma decided to do a BTEC National Diploma rather than A-levels, feeling that the more practical approach to learning, with an emphasis on coursework rather than exams, would suit her better. Emma went on to achieve a distinction in her National Diploma in Animal Management.

During her National Diploma, Emma found out about the BSc Animal Science degree at the University of Reading. She applied, was accepted and is now really enjoying her studies, especially learning more of the scientific theory behind the practical work done in her National Diploma. Emma found the different approach to learning at university a challenge but she feels very well prepared for the coursework due to the amount of research required as part of her National Diploma. Overall the step from FE to HE was easier than Emma had expected.

Emma's advice to anyone planning their post-GCSE study would be to thoroughly research the field you are thinking of going into and consider which route there would best suit your style of learning – for example, consider whether you are a more practical or a more theoretical learner. In the future Emma hopes to go to veterinary college but knows that it is very competitive, so she is also considering other options within the fields of animal and veterinary science. She knows that the combination of having both a degree and practical experience is becoming increasingly sought after by employers.

January 2010

## Partnership in the Creative Industries

Our Creative Industries sector is currently working with eleven of our partner institutions on projects that include:

- the developmental phases of (or the feasibility of) future Foundation degrees, potentially creating more opportunities for vocational learners to enter higher education;
- the delivery of 'HE Experience Days', aspiration-raising events that give further education students the opportunity to sample teaching and learning in a university setting;
- research into peer to peer mentoring which could be rolled out across the partnership;
- a one-day event to raise awareness of the breadth of creative careers and employment opportunities within art and design.

Some of these projects were proposed as a result of our recent Creative Industries Special Projects (CRISP) initiative which made available £100,000 to fund projects which supported the progression of learners into and through higher education. Fifteen



Delegates at the recent Creative Industries Forum at UCA

projects are now getting underway and will be completed within the next eighteen months.

The Creative Industries Forum is an opportunity for our partners to meet and discuss issues pertinent to the sector. Chaired by Ruth Gunstone, Director of Student Experience at Bucks New University, the most recent forum, which meets twice a year, was held in January at University for the Creative Arts (UCA) at Farnham, Surrey. The keynote topic was the Creative Campus Initiative (CCI), an innovative and dynamic programme of cultural events and activities leading up to 2012 that reflects the distinctive strength of creative and performing arts in South East higher education. A presentation by CCI Director Tim Eastop introduced the work being done by the consortium of thirteen universities in the region, the first phase of which will culminate in exhibitions and events in June and July this year. The next forum will take place in early July at Oxford Brookes University and will feature their contribution to the Creative Campus Initiative.

### University for the Creative Arts

[www.ucreative.ac.uk](http://www.ucreative.ac.uk)

*'...thoroughly research the field you are thinking of going into and consider which route there would best suit your style of learning'*

## IGAG conference at Easthampstead Park

In October 2009 Progress South Central hosted a conference for IAG practitioners across our four counties, at Easthampstead Park Conference Centre in Bracknell.

The keynote workshop was led by Tony Macfadyen and Carol Fuller from the Institute of Education at the University of Reading. They reported on their research into the information, advice and guidance provided for Year 11 students regarding their post-16 options (see page 24). The workshop was well received and stimulated much discussion. The 50 participants then took part in a series of workshops covering such topics as 'What kinds of students take Diplomas?', Foundation degrees and the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

The conference offered delegates the opportunity to gain some of the latest information regarding IAG in the area and to network with colleagues in the same field.

Views from those attending:

*'Excellent day, really valuable'*

*'Very useful to exchange experiences and views with a range of people'*

Delegates at the November 2009 Health and Social Care Forum at Bucks New University



Ann Bullen of the Department of Health South East giving a presentation on 'Living well with dementia: taking forward the national dementia strategy' at the May 2009 Health and Social Care Forum

## Partnership in Health and Social Care

The Health and Social Care Forum meets twice a year, hosted by each of our partner HEIs in turn. In May 2009, Oxford Brookes University hosted a very topical presentation on the National Dementia Strategy and the forum discussed the implications for workforce training and development. Ann Bullen, Interim Regional Lead for Older People and Dementia at the Department of Health South East, put the strategy into context for the education and training providers. David Shinegold, formerly Lead Co-ordinator for Skills for Care, Berkshire, fed back on a project in Bracknell Forest involving the creation of a support team for people with dementia that had directly led to reduced admissions both to hospital and residential care.

In November, we met at Bucks New University and gave the platform to NHS South Central Strategic Health Authority to discuss their proposed Framework for Continuous Professional/Personal Development for non-regulated staff employed at NHS bands 1 to 4. Emma Wilton, Widening Participation Manager for NHS Education South Central, and Mary Somerville from Skills Academy for Health led an interactive morning, taking full advantage of the opportunity for some lively round table discussion. Dawne West of Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust was our second speaker and explained their 'Aspire' programme which values the mental health support worker role and provides a progression pathway (the development work was funded by Progress South Central). The conclusion was a strong desire for 'consistent and constant communication' between healthcare employers and learning providers.

The Health and Social Care Forum provides a valuable opportunity for colleagues to meet, network, stimulate debate and think creatively about appropriate projects which our development funding can take forward and which employers and learning providers can sustain.

**Skills for Care** [www.skillsforcare.org.uk](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk)

**Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**  
[www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk)

## Learning Advice in Community Settings

In 2009 Progress South Central funded New Directions, Reading Borough Council's learning and employment service, to provide a course for people working in adult and community settings. The course aimed to develop the skills and underpinning knowledge needed to provide impartial information and advice on courses and further learning including progression from vocational jobs/opportunities into higher education. The course proved very successful, with 15 staff receiving a total of 49 days' worth of training.

After looking at feedback from the course, Reading Borough Council then decided, again with funding from Progress South Central, to make the course an OCN-accredited e-learning course, enabling staff to do 30 hours of self-study via the New Directions Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and only 1.5 days of face-to-face meetings. This blended-learning enabled students to complete the course around their work commitments, but also allowed interaction with other members of the course via chat rooms and course days.

The course was piloted during 2009 with ten students, front line and advisory staff from New Directions and staff from Scout Enterprises who were primarily using the course as underpinning knowledge for their NVQ Level 3 in Advice and Guidance. Feedback from the pilot has been used to develop recommendations that will inform the development of future new provision for IAG staff.

### New Directions

[www.newdirectionsreading.co.uk](http://www.newdirectionsreading.co.uk)



## Partnership in Construction

Progress South Central has supported three main projects in the Construction and the Built Environment sector in 2009:

- Surrey Education Business Partnership set up a programme involving a mobile classroom to encourage progression into higher education for construction learners. This will be complemented by a conference for practitioners in 2010.
- The Institution of Civil Engineers developed a mentoring scheme to allow those who have been working in the civil engineering field for many years, but who lacked the necessary academic base to qualify for full membership, to gain membership.
- East Berkshire College undertook a two part project; an employer engagement exercise and a programme of activities focusing on raising the aspirations of construction learners.

In late 2009, Progress South Central contracted Oxford Brookes University to be the lead institution for the Construction sector and Dr Karen Gaston was appointed Project Manager. Since undertaking her PhD focusing on the student experience of studying on building and construction degree programmes, Karen has held various research positions. Karen will work closely with Brian Wood in the Department of Real Estate and Construction.

In her new role Karen will be investigating progression routes for vocational students. This will involve mapping Level 3 to Level 4 provision across the Progress South Central partnership with the eventual aim of setting up progression agreements. Karen will also be coordinating new curriculum developments including a potential joint Masters programme between Oxford Brookes and Reading Universities (discussed at a previous construction forum and building upon work undertaken through SECBE) and possible new provision in the subject area of facilities management.

As with Progress South Central's other sector areas, there will be a focus in the coming year on how to encourage progression to higher education for 14–19 Diploma students and learners who have undertaken an apprenticeship programme. Work could include setting up a framework of bridging programmes and higher education taster events to respond to learners' needs. A construction forum event is planned for April 2010 which will aim to explore employers' attitudes to possible curriculum development.

### Oxford Brookes University School of the Built Environment

[www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/be](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/be)

## Perspective from Brian Wood, Senior Lecturer, School of the Built Environment, Oxford Brookes University

'I am really pleased that we at Oxford Brookes are involved with Progress South Central on this project. We have long been supportive of initiatives aimed at encouraging people from all kinds of background to aspire to and access professional careers in construction and the built environment. We therefore value Progress South Central's support to further develop these activities.'



## Perspective from a partner college: Abingdon & Witney College

Abingdon & Witney College is one of Progress South Central's partners and also a member of the Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership (ACP).

Throughout 2009 Abingdon & Witney College have been engaged in various ways with Progress South Central:

- College staff practitioners have attended and contributed towards sector forum discussions in Health and Social Care and Creative Industries, organised by Progress South Central.
- Steve Billcliffe, Assistant Principal, Development at Abingdon & Witney College, represented further education colleges associated with Oxford Brookes on Progress South Central's Executive Board.
- Progress South Central's HE/FE Liaison Officer based at Oxford Brookes produced a case study of a mature learner who had re-entered higher education at the College and completed a Foundation degree in Business, Management and Communications. This case study has been used for marketing and aspiration-raising purposes to promote progression and may also feature in the 2010 College presentation for adult learners' week.
- Abingdon & Witney College were successful in a bid for funding they submitted to Progress South Central as part of the First Steps Phase Two funding round advertised in May 2009. This project aims to gather employer views to ensure that work placements and work-based assessments are operating well and increase employer awareness of the College's existing Foundation degree provision. Interviews with employers are now taking place, which will help to ensure the quality and subject responsiveness

Godfrey Smith (Progress South Central Development Manager, Creative Industries), Keith Higgins (Abingdon and Witney College, Director, Quality and Improvement), Dennis Carey (Abingdon and Witney College, Director, Curriculum) and Carole Kane (Abingdon and Witney College, HE Coordinator)



of the curriculum. Progress South Central's HE/FE Liaison Officer gave a presentation at Abingdon & Witney College's HE staff development event where this bid was launched and discussed.

- Progress South Central has given Abingdon & Witney College funding support for a variety of new Foundation degree developments within the Creative Industries.

In the future Abingdon & Witney College hope to work with Progress South Central to set up online study skill support and develop a strategy to encourage apprenticeship students to progress to higher education.

### Abingdon & Witney College

[www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk](http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk)

### Carole Kane, HE Coordinator, Abingdon & Witney College, says:

'Over the past few years we have developed a very strong relationship with Progress South Central and regularly meet up to throw our ideas on the table! These are lively discussions that invariably result in exciting new research projects being taken forward. Progress South Central are so supportive both with guidance and funding. They really do have an excellent understanding and knowledge of HE in FE.'



## 'Develop your workforce: Employer's Guide to Higher Education'

Our partners told us that employers would benefit from a straightforward guide to higher education.

As a result, we produced 'Develop your workforce – Employer's Guide to Higher Education'. It explains how the acquisition of higher level

skills can benefit business, the qualifications available at various levels and contact details of our partner colleges and universities where work-based learning opportunities are available. Copies have been widely distributed to employers by our partners and have been well received.

The second edition is now available on request (please email [psc@reading.ac.uk](mailto:psc@reading.ac.uk)) or can be accessed on our website at [www.progresssouthcentral.org.uk](http://www.progresssouthcentral.org.uk).

### Perspective from Bill Hunt, Higher Education Manager, Oxford & Cherwell Valley College and Chair, Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership Steering Group

'Oxford Brookes Associate College Partnership Group and OCVC greatly appreciate Progress South Central's involvement in and support for development projects.'

*'Over the past few years we have developed a very strong relationship with Progress South Central and regularly meet up to throw our ideas on the table!'*

## CASE STUDY:

### Bubble Creative Solutions

Rural Northamptonshire may seem an unlikely setting for a dynamic creative enterprise but that is where you will find Bubble Creative Solutions Ltd, set up by Terry and Caroline Kendhammer about six years ago.



Terry and Caroline, both alumni of Oxford and Cherwell Valley College where they met whilst studying BA Graphic Design, exemplify learners who have taken the vocational BTEC National Diploma route through further education before completing their Bachelor degrees in a 'Higher Education in Further Education' setting.

'I always knew I wanted to do something on my own' says Terry and by the time he graduated, in 2004, he felt ready to start up his own business and Bubble came into being. Caroline took a different route, gaining valuable experience as a practising designer and studio manager before joining the business full-time as Creative Director last year. The name 'Bubble' suggests 'fun and enjoyment' which Terry and Caroline want to be at the heart of their business. But there is a strong community ethic too. It was Terry's intention to 'engage with people and give something back to students and education', so in the early days building the business was combined with undertaking a PGCE qualification, again with Oxford and Cherwell Valley College, where he is now a visiting lecturer. As such, Bubble intend to offer work placements whereby students will gain valuable real-life experiences of the creative and commercial considerations of design practice.

There is a fitting completeness to Terry and Caroline's story so far. They have clearly benefited from further and higher education and understand its value and now they are in a position to help future generations of designers succeed in finding their own creative solutions.

*Bubble designed and produced Progress South Central's booklet 'Develop your work force – Employer's Guide to Higher Education'.*

January 2010

**Bubble Creative Solutions**

[www.bubblecreativesolutions.co.uk](http://www.bubblecreativesolutions.co.uk)



# The team

## **Director – Fay Croft**

email f.croft@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2331  
mobile 07894 598403

## **Deputy Director – Paul Gallagher**

email p.gallagher@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2336  
mobile 07515 190526

## **Development Manager, Health and Social Care – Ann Stainton**

email k.a.stainton@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2332  
mobile 07894 599028

## **Development Manager, Creative Industries – Godfrey Smith**

email g.j.smith@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2334  
mobile 07894 599027

## **Monitoring and Evaluation Officer – Dr Emma Thomas**

email e.c.thomas@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2337

## **Partnership Project Officer – Catherine Falkner-Lyne**

email c.falknerlyne@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2325  
mobile 07515 190528

## **Information and Communication Development Officer – Jude Brindley**

email j.brindley@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2339

## **Project Administrator**

email psc@reading.ac.uk  
tel 0118 378 2330

## **HE/FE Liaison Officer, Bucks New University – Debby Holmes**

email Deborah.Holmes@bucks.ac.uk  
tel 01494 522141  
mobile 07921 936893

## **HE/FE Liaison Officer, Oxford Brookes University – Janet Cox**

email jcox@brookes.ac.uk  
tel 01865 484933  
mobile 07515 190527

## **Profile of Debby Holmes and Janet Cox, HE/FE Liaison Officers**

As HE/FE Liaison Officers, Debby Holmes (Bucks New University) and Janet Cox (Oxford Brookes University) are a crucial link with Progress South Central's partner universities. Their role is to promote and support the work of Progress South Central within their own universities and their associated FE college partners. Debby has worked both in the FE and HE sectors, experience which has proved invaluable in her role with Progress South Central. Janet joined Progress South Central from the Learning Partnerships Office at the University of Bath, where she gained experience of working with partner colleges and developing, administering and co-ordinating the University's Foundation degree provision. Currently, Janet's duties include taking the lead on Progress South Central's work relating to 14–19 Diplomas and supporting the setting up of projects within Oxford Brookes and partner further education colleges which includes an associate college partner website. Debby is currently supporting a number of projects at Bucks funded by Progress South Central. Both Janet and Debby are involved with developing progression agreements with their partner colleges. Both enjoy the liaison with a wide range of people and the opportunity to raise awareness of the Lifelong Learning Network's work.





# Glossary

APL	Accreditation of Prior Learning
CIOB	Chartered Institute of Building
CPD	Continuing/Continuous Professional Development
Fd	Foundation degree
FE	Further Education
FEC	Further Education College
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HND	Higher National Diploma
IAG	Information, Advice and Guidance
LLN	Lifelong Learning Network
ND	National Diploma
OCVC	Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
SECBE	South East Centre for the Built Environment
SHA	Strategic Health Authority
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service



## Our partner universities and colleges

### **Partner universities**

University of Reading (lead partner)	<a href="http://www.reading.ac.uk">www.reading.ac.uk</a>
Bucks New University	<a href="http://www.bucks.ac.uk">www.bucks.ac.uk</a>
Oxford Brookes University	<a href="http://www.brookes.ac.uk">www.brookes.ac.uk</a>
University of Surrey	<a href="http://www.surrey.ac.uk">www.surrey.ac.uk</a>

### **Associated colleges**

Abingdon & Witney College	<a href="http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk">www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk</a>
Academy of Contemporary Music	<a href="http://www.acm.ac.uk">www.acm.ac.uk</a>
Amersham & Wycombe College	<a href="http://www.amersham.ac.uk">www.amersham.ac.uk</a>
Aylesbury College	<a href="http://www.aylesbury.ac.uk">www.aylesbury.ac.uk</a>
Basingstoke College of Technology	<a href="http://www.bcot.ac.uk">www.bcot.ac.uk</a>
BCA (Berkshire College of Agriculture)	<a href="http://www.bca.ac.uk">www.bca.ac.uk</a>
Bracknell and Wokingham College	<a href="http://www.bracknell.ac.uk">www.bracknell.ac.uk</a>
Brockenhurst College	<a href="http://www.brock.ac.uk">www.brock.ac.uk</a>
Brooklands College	<a href="http://www.brooklands.ac.uk">www.brooklands.ac.uk</a>
East Berkshire College	<a href="http://www.eastberks.ac.uk">www.eastberks.ac.uk</a>
Farnborough College of Technology	<a href="http://www.farn-ct.ac.uk">www.farn-ct.ac.uk</a>
Guildford College of Further and Higher Education	<a href="http://www.guildford.ac.uk">www.guildford.ac.uk</a>
GSA Conservatoire	<a href="http://www.conservatoire.org">www.conservatoire.org</a>
Highbury College	<a href="http://www.highbury.ac.uk">www.highbury.ac.uk</a>
Newbury College	<a href="http://www.newbury-college.ac.uk">www.newbury-college.ac.uk</a>
North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCoT)	<a href="http://www.nescot.ac.uk">www.nescot.ac.uk</a>
Oxford & Cherwell Valley College	<a href="http://www.ocvc.ac.uk">www.ocvc.ac.uk</a>
Ruskin College	<a href="http://www.ruskin.ac.uk">www.ruskin.ac.uk</a>
Solihull College	<a href="http://www.solihull.ac.uk">www.solihull.ac.uk</a>
Sparsholt College	<a href="http://www.sparsholt.ac.uk">www.sparsholt.ac.uk</a>
Swindon College	<a href="http://www.swindon-college.ac.uk">www.swindon-college.ac.uk</a>
Uxbridge College	<a href="http://www.uxbridgecollege.ac.uk">www.uxbridgecollege.ac.uk</a>





University of Reading  
Building L14  
London Road  
Reading RG1 5AQ

**0118 378 2330**

[psc@reading.ac.uk](mailto:psc@reading.ac.uk)

The Lifelong Learning Network  
for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire,  
Oxfordshire and Surrey