

### **Beacon Status and Graduation Celebrations at Blackburne House**

The Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, presented Learning and Skills Beacon status to the Blackburne House Women's Technology and Education Centre at ceremony in Westminster.

Learning and Skills Beacon status recognises excellence and innovation and is awarded to organisations which demonstrate outstanding performance in teaching and learning supported by outstanding leadership and management. Organisations with the status are expected to play a key role in leading improvement, reform and change in the sector.

Learning and Skills Beacon status is awarded to post-16 colleges and other learning providers funded by the Learning and Skills Council and inspected by the Office for Standards (OFSTED) or the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).

But the celebrations don't stop there! Over one hundred women will be graduating from courses at the forthcoming Blackburne House Graduation ceremony. Amongst the graduates will be Lisa and Margaret Mairah, Mother and Daughter, who will be graduating from the CMI Executive Diploma in Management.

Margaret, Manager of a local Sure Start Programme, first came to Blackburne House (Women's Technology and Education Centre) nearly 20 years ago. She has since returned to successfully complete her professional qualification. "This has been an interesting experience," says Margaret, "It used to be me helping my daughter with her homework, now it's the other way around! After 23 years Blackburne House are still providing a high quality service that is building the capacity of women on Merseyside. I came to Blackburne House with no qualifications; the courses empowered me to go into higher education and so it is fitting that I returned to gain my professional qualification"

Also graduating are women from a wide range of courses including the Young Women's Courses, Constructive Women, Housing, ICT, Fresh Focus and Teacher Education.

Claire Dove MBE, Chief Executive of Blackburne House, stated, "The graduation ceremony provides the opportunity to celebrate the success of so many women. Here at Blackburne House we strive to equip women with the skills to add to the local

economy. This year we have had a number of women who have successfully gained employment in non traditional areas of work including Construction. We hope that being awarded Beacon Status and the success of our students encourages many more women to choose Blackburne House as a place in which they can grow and realise their ambitions and goals.”

Blackburne House is already enrolling for courses starting in September. Call the course information line on 0800 587 7672 for more information.

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**Notes to the Editor:**

- The Blackburne House Graduation ceremonies take place on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> and Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July, 10 am to 12 noon in the Main Hall at Blackburne House. Students on the CMI Diploma in Management Course will graduate on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July
- The Blackburne House Group seeks to transform women’s lives through the provision of training and opportunities of every kind in an environment of equality and inspiration. Blackburne House has been offering educational opportunities to women for over 20 years. The organisation has been officially recognised as a centre of excellence having been awarded Grade 1 for education provision by the LSC. This grade was only achieved by the top 8% of external Adult Education Institutions in Britain. In addition, the centre is ranked in the top 10% of colleges and educational providers in the UK.
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- Learning and Skills Beacon status is awarded to post-16 colleges and other learning providers funded by the Learning and Skills Council and inspected by the Office for Standards (OFSTED) or the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI).
- The Learning and Beacon status award was started by the Department for Education and Skills’ (DfES) Standards Unit and is now funded by the Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning – a new Non-Departmental Public Body created in April 2006 (see below). UK Skills is currently contracted to

manage the selection and awards process for the Learning and Skills Beacon status on behalf of the QIA. UK Skills is an independent organisation which champions skills and learning for work through competitions, awards and events.

- There are 88 Learning and Skills Beacons in England. Since the status was introduced in 2002, it has been awarded to general FE colleges, tertiary colleges, sixth form colleges, agricultural and horticultural colleges, specialist residential colleges, work based learning providers, adult community learning providers and a Higher Education Institution which is delivering FE and work-based learning. A breakdown of Learning and Skills Beacons by region and type of provider is available on request.
- For more information on Learning and Skills Beacon Status please visit [www.beaconstatus.org](http://www.beaconstatus.org).