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NEW NATIONAL ADVANCEMENT SERVICE WILL BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO WORK ACROSS MERSEYSIDE

New research shows vocational qualifications are route to higher wages

A radical new advisory service will combine skills and training advice with practical guidance for people on how to overcome the barriers they face in getting on in life, Skills Secretary John Denham set out today.

For the first time, the adult advancement and careers service (AACCS) will provide a one-stop-shop for those seeking training and help into work but who also face problems in areas like childcare, money matters, housing and disability issues.

Publishing a prospectus setting out how the new service will develop, Mr Denham announced the names and locations of ten prototype advisory services across England, one of them across Merseyside, whose work will inform the launch of the AACCS in 2010.

The service, which will be freely available to all but targeted at those most in need, will play a key role in boosting social mobility - empowering people to access the opportunities they need to realise their ambitions, improve their lives and those of their families.

Mr Denham believes that although for most people, information about training courses and skills development is easily accessible, many such as the low paid and unemployed continue to face barriers which hold them back.

Previous research has shown that many people face significant barriers to accessing opportunities to get into and on at work. These include:

- Women seeking to return to work after having a child who cannot find suitable childcare at an appropriate place and time: 41% of mothers cite time due to work and 74% cite time due to family care as the largest barrier to training;
- Those with full time caring responsibilities: an estimated 1 in 5 carers have left or turned down a job because of caring responsibilities;
- Employees of small firms which can find it hard to provide skills development support for its staff.

He said:

“Everyone deserves the best chance to get on in work and in life – but often people find a range of barriers in their way, whether they are seeking work, trying to get a better job, or worried about redundancy.

“Those barriers are different for everyone – whether finding suitable childcare, understanding employment rights, unblocking problems with housing – and the new service needs to be able to help people tackle them all, changing with them as they change through life.

“To make that happen, services must come together and work in new ways to make sure people seeking advice are seen as individuals, that all their particular needs are fully understood and that advice is provided that draws together everything they need.”

The ten prototypes will run for two years, testing a range of different approaches in establishing local partnerships bringing together nextstep services, Jobcentre Plus, unionlearn, local authorities, housing associations, voluntary and community sector organisations, Connexions, Primary Care Trusts, the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, Sure Start Children’s Centres, and others.

On Merseyside Blackburne House, which helps women find routes back into employment, is coordinating the project on behalf of the Voluntary Organisation

Learning Association. AACCS will use the training-led social enterprise's experience and contact network which has been built up over the last 25 years.

Jo McGrath, Enterprise Director at Blackburne House, said: "We feel it is crucial that advice services locally have a joined up approach, and we very much welcome the opportunity to take part in the building of local partnerships and ensure the voluntary sector has a role to play."

Among the tools being piloted on Merseyside is a web-based reporting scheme which allows clients to review the quality of the AACCS service they are getting. Jo McGrath added: "We felt it would be innovative if customers could give feedback on the services they are getting from us, and in this way we can drive up the quality of that service."

Research has also shown that accessing learning, improving skills, undertaking work-based training and/or gaining a qualification can have a positive effect on people's lives and those of their families.

Evidence shows that improving the skills of adults with poor reading and writing skills gives their children a better start in education and means they are less likely to fall behind their classmates at school. In a recent evaluation of Train to Gain, the Government's flagship skills service, 43 per cent of people who had completed their training reported a pay rise whilst 30 per cent reported a promotion.

Today, DIUS publishes further research evidence concluding that adults who gain a vocational qualification at GCSE level are more likely to go on to further learning, leading in turn to higher wages. This research adds to a wealth of other evidence that learning new skills and gaining qualifications is an excellent way of getting on in the labour market, increasing people's chances of gaining employment and progressing once in work.

The Government first set out its aim to create a single advice service on learning, work and life last year and when it pledged to establish a nationwide adult advancement and careers service by 2010, working with Jobcentre Plus.

Mr Denham has also pledged that existing careers services would act now to help people facing redundancy in the current difficult time.

He said:

“We have already announced a package of support to help small and medium sized businesses provide training to their employees in the face of the difficult times we are entering. We are also this week publishing a leaflet with DWP showing what support is available now to help people facing redundancy. Our current careers advice services play a key role in this, providing flexible, personalised advice on dealing with redundancy, refreshing your skills or learning new ones, applying for and getting jobs.”

Notes to Editors

1. The ten prototypes

The prototypes will test a range of approaches to establishing local partnerships to act as both outreach points and sources of wider advice on getting on in work. The prototypes will:

- explore how the voluntary and community sector can contribute to these approaches and work with partners; and
- carry out outreach activity in the community and in a wide range of settings.

They will develop approaches which address the needs of those in work, particularly the low skilled and low paid, and those out of work needing advice and support to move into sustainable employment.

The prototypes are outlined in the chart below:

Area	Description
Greater Manchester	“Hub and spoke” advancement network across the ten local authority areas with a common set of resources, referral mechanisms, protocols and standards. Partners involved include: Jobcentre Plus, nextstep services, employers, employees and employer-facing intermediaries.
Greater Merseyside	Voluntary sector led network of advisory services, complemented by an innovative web tool ‘myIAGspace’ to make available in one place to all partners information on a wide range of advice

	<p>services across the six boroughs of Greater Merseyside.</p> <p>Partners involved include: Greater Merseyside's Voluntary Community and Faith Sector Learning Consortium (VOLA) working in conjunction with the nextstep regional prime contractor, Jobcentre Plus and City Employment Strategy partners and major employers.</p>
Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffs	<p>Targeted networks in primary care and social housing settings that place quality assured careers information and guidance at the heart of wider personal support.</p> <p>Partners involved include: Stoke-on-Trent City Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, the Primary Care Trust and the nextstep provider.</p>
Black Country	<p>Advancement advisers ensuring that individuals can quickly access a range of advisory services no matter which organisation they use as an initial point of contact.</p> <p>Partners involved include: Citizen Advice Bureau, Local PCTs, Local Involvement Network, Connexions, nextstep, local colleges, third sector training organisations and a cluster of Registered Social Landlord (RSL)</p>
Brighton and Hove	<p>Local authority led partnership focusing on the development of people and organisations, tools to assist them and the co-location of delivery from a wide range of advice and support services to provide a better coordinated, multi-agency approach to service delivery.</p> <p>Partners within the prototype include Jobcentre Plus, VT Careers Enterprise, Sussex Partnership Trust (PCT Commissioners for Mental Health Services), Pathways to Work and ESF programme providers (DWP and LSC), City College Brighton and Hove, Social Welfare Law Network (ASSG) and Brighton and Hove CVS Advice Services Network..</p>
South Hampshire	<p>Advancement experts helping the low skilled into sustainable employment. Co-location of staff from key agencies in "hubs" and satellites across the area to give clients the shortest route to as wide as possible a range of advice and help and linking in with the Integrating Employment and Skills trial in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.</p> <p>Partners involved include the local authorities in South Hampshire, Jobcentre Plus, nextstep services, housing organisations, libraries, and employer-facing intermediaries.</p>

Slough	<p>Local authority led delivering a coherent service accessible through multiple access points within a range of generic and specialist, community, learning, health, social, housing, careers and business advisory services.</p> <p>Partners involved include Slough Borough Council, Slough Council for Voluntary Services, the Wellness at Work Slough Group, nextstep, Jobcentre plus and East Berkshire College and Thames Valley university.</p>
Brent and Ealing	<p>Housing, employment and skills staff will be brought together to develop an improved advice offer, testing some of the possible incentives that could be provided to tenants to encourage participation in skills and employment activities.</p> <p>Partners involved include Catalyst Communities Housing Association, Brent and Ealing Council with links to nextstep, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary and community sector.</p>
Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth	<p>Advisers engaging parents on low incomes, both workless and in work, through Children’s Centres and community settings and linking with sub-regional and borough-specific provision to address barriers to learning and employment .</p> <p>Partners involved are Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth local authorities with links to nextstep, Jobcentre Plus and third sector skills and employability support organisations.</p>
Islington, Camden and Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea.	<p>Outreach is at the heart of this approach, with the “advancement advisers “able to work within the community and identify and offer a holistic solution to the multiple barriers faced by adults needing to upskill and progress into and within the labour market.</p> <p>Partners involved are Islington, Camden and Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea Borough Councils building on outreach through housing offices, Jobcentre Plus, nextstep and children’s centres.</p>

2. The prospectus

Shaping the future – a new Adult Advancement and Careers Service for England is available at www.dius.gov.uk

Notes to editors need to cite the research we are going to quote....and link this announcement in with announcements made this week ie. continuing drive to help people get on in life and success in current economic climate....

3. Barriers to training and employment

Carers

- There are 4.27million carers of working age in GB.
- One third are not working and of these over half say they want to do so - carers report difficulty in getting information, accessing services and negotiating flexibility at work.
- An estimated 1 in 5 carers have left or turned down a job because of caring responsibilities.

Working mothers and skills levels

- 32% of mothers have skill level below NVQ2.
- Propensity to return to work increases steadily with skill level, - only 42% of mothers with no qualifications return to work within 18 months compared to 80% level 3.
- 41% of mothers cite time due to work and 74% cite time due to family care as the largest barrier to training.

SMEs

- SMEs account for 59.2% of all private sector employment.
- Among business start ups, those with least prior training tend to be those with Level 2 or below and no qualifications.

(DWP Assessment of Carers Employment and Income Task Force Proposals – June 2008; Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities –DoH, DIUS, DCSF, DWP, DCLG, BERR; Newborns and new schools: critical times in women’s employment. DWP Research Report No 308; Maternity rights and mother’s employment decisions. DWP Research Report No 496, PMSU Draft Interim Report - Second Chances; BERR statistical first release on SMEs <http://stats.berr.gov.uk/ed/sme/smestats2007-ukspr.pdf>)

4. Parents’ literacy and its effect on children

Research, published by the National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy in May 2008, found that:

- Poor basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, transfer from one generation to the next;
- Parents’ basic skills have a significantly greater impact on their child’s cognitive ability than other factors such as the family structure, household income, a parent’s education and socio-economic group;
- Parents’ literacy skills have the most significant impact on the cognitive ability of young children. Five-year-olds from families with good literacy perform up to 65% better in cognitive tests than those who are from families with the lowest levels of literacy.

(Parents’ basic skills and their children’s test scores’ by Augustin De Coulon, Elena Meschi and Anna Vignoles, at the NRDC and the Centre for Economics of Education (CEE), Institute of Education).

5. DIUS report '*An analysis of the benefit of NVQ2 qualifications acquired at age 26-34*'

The report by Augustin De Coulon and Anna Vignoles indicates that there are positive effects on wage growth from lifelong learning for some learners. The report also finds strong positive average earnings returns for NVQ2 qualifications for women.

The finding of a strong association between gaining a NVQ2 and further accredited learning indicates that NVQ2 may be used as a stepping stone to further learning, which in turn, yields high wage and employment returns. Thus, a NVQ2 could be an important route back into learning for those who otherwise wouldn't have the chance to progress.

To download a copy of the report visit www.dius.gov.uk

6. Train to Gain

Train to Gain learner evaluation, published in May 2008, reported that:

- Of those people who had completed a qualification through Train to Gain,
- 73 per cent reported that they had gained skills that help them do their current job better, and 81 per cent reported that they had gained skills that would help them do a better job in the future.
- Some 43 per cent of people who had completed their training reported having received a pay rise, and
- 30 per cent reported having had promotion.

More information: <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/Lsc/National/nat-ttglearnerevaluation-may08.PDF>