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*Learning is like rowing upstream: not to advance is to drop back.*  
**Chinese Proverb**

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Welcome to the eight's issue of *Connect Learning Gazette* – learning and development resource dedicated to Union Learning Reps.

As you know, this is the last edition, prepared by Sasha, who is leaving today to return to her main place of work. From now on, if you come across any interesting snippets of information that you would like to pass on to the others, please e-mail Kacie Ashford [kacie@connectuk.org](mailto:kacie@connectuk.org)

## Survey Results

Big thanks to all ULRs, who have responded to my plea and filled in the e-skills UK awareness survey, which was circulated twice – in September last year and in June this year. Below is the summary of the results

In **September 2008**, the survey was sent to 32 ULRs, with 17 responses received (53% return rate).

Out of all respondents, 76% were *not familiar* with the term “Sector Skills Council” and the same numbers of respondents were *not aware* of e-skills UK. *None* have used their products and services and most (over 70%) were *unfamiliar* with the term “Labour Market Information (LMI)”. *Nobody* listed e-skills UK as their source of information for supporting members with learning advice.

The second survey, containing identical questions, was sent out in **June 2009**, to 37 ULRs, and 9 responses were received (19% return rate).

Out of the all respondents, 78% were *familiar* with the term “Sector Skills Council” and the same percentage were *aware* of e-skills UK.

22% have *used* their products and services and 56% were *familiar* with the term “Labour Market Information (LMI)”. *One* person listed e-skills UK as their source of information for supporting members with learning advice.

This exercise shows that over the last 10 months, there has been a significant increase in the level of awareness of SSCs in general and e-skills UK specifically, among the ULRs. The ULRs have started using e-skills UK products and services. It also indicates a notable increase in understanding of the term Labour Market Information.

## What's New?

### Ministerial Responsibilities Announced for the New Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Lord Mandelson, has outlined ministerial responsibilities for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). This new Department, which merges the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), will have the principal role of building Britain's capabilities to compete in the global economy. BIS will combine BERR's expertise in shaping the enterprise environment with the strengths of DIUS in skills policy and innovation. The new ministerial team include the following:

- **Pat McFadden MP:** Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills, with a particular focus on industrial activism
- **Kevin Brennan MP:** Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs
- **Lord Drayson:** Minister for Science and Innovation
- **Baroness Vadera:** Minister for Economic Competitiveness, Small Business and Enterprise

View more online <http://www.bis.gov.uk/ministerial-responsibilities-announced-at-department-for-business-innovation-and-skills>

### IT suppliers forced to invest in staff training

IT suppliers will have to commit to boosting the tech skills of their workforce if they want to win government contracts under plans unveiled yesterday.

Speaking at a government and IT industry summit, Skills Secretary John Denham said there is a risk employers will cut training in the downturn so the government is looking at ways of encouraging workforce investment, especially in IT, viewed as vital for the UK's future economic growth.

Denham said in a statement: "In tough economic times like these, there is a danger that employers will reduce their investment in the skills of their employees as they look to cut costs. But research shows that companies who don't train are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those who do."

"A failure to train now will mean that when the economy begins to grow again we will not have the skilled workers we need to seize those opportunities that growth presents."

He added: "The IT industry is one of the industries which is critical to the future of the British economy and its ability to survive and thrive post-recession. It's vitally important that British business has IT skills to draw on at all levels."

At the summit Denham met with IT representatives across government and industry to look at how Whitehall departments and their suppliers can work together to deliver training commitments as part of contract wins, and to discuss more broadly how the procurement process can be better shaped to benefit the IT sector.

Sector skills organisation e-skills UK has predicted around 140,000 IT graduates will be needed each year until 2018 to keep up with demand - demand that can't be filled by school and university graduates alone - meaning investment in IT training, reskilling and upskilling is imperative.

Recognising the need to boost UK IT skills the government last year gave the go ahead for [a National Skills Academy for IT](#) which is due to open its doors this summer. The Academy will train 10,000 people in its first three years of operation.

Whitehall spends almost £14bn annually on procuring IT services, according to the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills - part of £175bn spent annually across the public sector on buying goods and services.

## On the Couch with e-skills UK

### Latest e-skills UK ICT inquiry identifies key concerns of UK businesses

e-skills UK has published the latest issue of the ICT Inquiry, reporting on the results from our survey of UK businesses carried out during the first quarter of 2009.

As well as providing an update on the demand and supply of IT/Telecoms skills, this ICT Inquiry *looks in detail at the effect of the economic downturn* - reporting on the concerns and *likely actions to be taken by employers* as a result.

Key findings in this issue include:

- In response to the economic downturn, around nine in ten firms thought it 'fairly' or 'very' likely that they would review or reduce costs over the coming year.
- Almost one quarter of firms anticipated a decrease in their overall headcount over the coming year, though around nine out of ten firms forecast that the number of IT/Telecoms staff employed would remain unchanged.
- One fifth of companies anticipated a decrease in bonuses/other benefits for IT/Telecoms staff, while a similar number expected the budget for recruitment/ salaries to diminish over the year.
- Around two fifths of firms had recruited staff during the final quarter of 2008, and of these almost one quarter had been seeking to fill IT/Telecoms positions.
- Around one in six IT/Telecoms recruiters were experiencing difficulties recruiting staff with the right skills, qualifications or experience, with the business skills of applicants most often thought to be below the level needed.
- Amongst those employers with vacancies for other staff (i.e. outside of the IT function) the IT user skills of applicants were generally felt to be equal to/above the level needed of them though almost one third of recruiters stated that the database and spreadsheet skills of candidates were below the level required.
- Virtually all those surveyed said *spending on training for IT/Telecoms professionals would increase, or at least stay the same over the coming year.*



For the full report see here

[http://eskills.cgml1.com/eskills/Instances/eskills/documents//Research/ICTInquiry\\_Q1\\_09.pdf](http://eskills.cgml1.com/eskills/Instances/eskills/documents//Research/ICTInquiry_Q1_09.pdf)

## Number Crunching

### Value of Education and Skills in Turbulent Times

The Confederation of British Industry has published findings of a survey of employers' views on education and skills issues. Based on responses from 581 organisations of varying sizes, it looks at issues such as developing skills during the recession, basic skills deficits, the performance of managers, the employability skills of graduates and the role of apprenticeships. Among the key findings are the following:

- 61% of businesses see improving productivity and performance as their main priority for the next three years and 36% are primarily concerned with maintaining financial stability.
- 43% of employers rate the competency levels of low skilled staff as good. 90% of firms have a training and development plan and are seeing an impact on bottom-line performance.
- Two fifths of employers (40%) are concerned about employees' poor basic literacy and numeracy skills and concern about basic skills is especially acute in retail and manufacturing.
- Employers are satisfied with the skills of senior leaders but this is concern over the performance of junior and middle managers.
- Over three quarters of firms consider employability skills to be an essential factor when recruiting new graduates.
- Companies are experiencing difficulty recruiting people with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills. While large employers generally said they would continue taking on apprentices, a fifth (17%) of small firms have ceased their involvement.
- Small businesses are struggling to make links with universities – 45% have no links compared to only 7% of the largest firms.

Download full details here <http://www.cbi.org.uk/pdf/20090406-cbi-education-and-skills-survey-2009.pdf>

## Spread the Word

### Information to Intelligence: A Common LMI Framework for Sector Skills Councils

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills had published a booklet, setting out in detail what is expected of Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in the area of Labour Market Information (LMI), and outlining a common LMI framework for SSCs.

LMI can be useful to our reps and members, as it helps to ensure that they are well informed as they can be about the labour market. This information can help them to make the right decision regarding their career. SSCs following the standards outlined in the framework, will ensure that their LMI is of the highest quality, consistent and comparable.

To download the document, click here:

<http://www.ukces.org.uk/pdf/LMI%20Report%20A5%20With%20Links%20FINAL.pdf> .

## Beyond Learning

### UK “worst electrical recycler” - a study on recycling suggests Britons are the worst in Europe when it comes to recycling electrical equipment.

Computer manufacturer Dell found that fewer than half of UK residents regularly recycled old hardware, compared with more than 80% of Germans. Within the UK, the Welsh are the worst when it comes to recycling technology; almost 20% have never done so.

It is thought the UK creates enough electrical waste each year to fill Wembley Stadium six times over.

Environmental consultant Tony Juniper said that lack of awareness was a serious issue.

"Governments in every country need to make the disposal of old electrical equipment as

In early May, mobile operator O2 looked at what electrical equipment was inside a typical home. It found that there was an average of 2.4 TVs, 1.6 computers, 2.4 games consoles, 3 mobile phones, and 2.2 MP3 players.



### Historic legislation

Introduced by the European Commission in 2002, although not coming into force in the UK until January 2007, the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive (WEEE) was European legislation designed to "reduce the amount of electrical and electronic equipment being produced and to encourage everyone to reuse, recycle and recover it".

There are concerns that many items that are disposed of - especially computer equipment - still work but have been rendered obsolete by new technology. A number of charities actively collect IT equipment so it can be used in the developing world.

Jean Cox-Kearns, recycling manager with

Dell, acknowledged that was preferable to recycling, although she did have reservations.

"I agree we should maximise the use of computer equipment. However, we need to find out what happens to the equipment after they [the recipients] are finished with them, otherwise it is effectively dumping."



## Any Other Business

It has been a lot of fun working with you, I will miss you all! Sasha xx

