

Local youngsters in care are highlight of national Aimhigher conference



Four local young people in care provided the focus of a major national Aimhigher* conference involving over 140 delegates from across the country. This conference promoted the learning outcomes of the two year Aimhigher "Way Ahead" project.

This project has provided opportunities to help looked after children and those in care experience life in further and higher education through a number of innovative activities, including summer schools at local universities and taster activities in colleges.

The conference was chaired by David Akinsanya, a former BBC Journalist, well-known for his campaigning work to improve the life chances of children and young people in care. David's work includes the programme, "Raised by the State". The conference included a filmed discussion with David and the four young people, during which they each described how the project had helped them with their future plans and career

options; this was followed by a live discussion and questions from the conference audience.

Asked for his thoughts about the impact of the project, David Akinsanya says:

'10 years ago if you had spoken to a group of young people at this stage of their care you would have been in a totally different situation. You would have people not having any plans or ideas about where they are going, not feeling confident in themselves, nor being able to interact socially. I feel really warm to the fact that young people involved with this project have an extra start in their lives. I think that is so important for young people in care.'

Delegates received a pack of Aimhigher "Way Ahead" resources produced to support the training and development of staff and carers who work with or look after children and young people in care. These resources have proved to be very popular and include booklets and leaflets about future learning options and how to meet the needs of gifted and talented children and young people in care.

For further details about our national project for Looked after children, please contact Sang Townsley or Tim Farthing at the Aimhigher "Way Ahead" project, C/O VESA.

Young Apprenticeships in Leicestershire

Funding has recently been announced for Cohort 4 of the Young Apprenticeship programme (a two year programme aimed at year 10 students due to start in September 2007). Next academic year we are hoping to offer a new Young Apprenticeship in Health and Social Care in partnership with "Skills for Care" alongside our current curriculum area of Business. There is an expectation that more students will be involved, but please note that the funding per student has been reduced by one third for this cohort.

Meanwhile some news about current Young Apprenticeship activity. The Cohort 2 Business Studies (2005-07) from Beaumont Leys Specialist Science School have already achieved their technical certificates in Business Administration and are now working towards their full NVQ. They also spend fifty days over the two years in a work placement which they value as a fully integrated part of their qualifications.

For further information contact Viv Laxton at the VESA office

Personal Development Curriculum Support Zone

Over the last two years VESA, Connexions and local schools, colleges and HE providers have been working together on a PDC project funded by Aimhigher. We have developed review and planning tools, resources, good practice notes and case studies to help learning organisations develop co-ordinated approaches to planning and delivering the Personal Development Curriculum.

We are now building a web-based resource to share these project outcomes and resources. It will be set up to encourage other learning organisations to feed back thoughts and share ideas for practice. The site is structured around a curriculum design model that aims to give a logical approach to reviewing and developing a PDC. The aim is to have the site live by Easter.

If you would like to find out more or contribute ideas/case studies to the local site, please contact Kay Ives (VESA) 0116 2707342 kay.ives@vesa.org.uk or Amanda Fearn (Connexions) 0116 261 5920 afearn@connexions-leics.org

If you would like to read more about the PDC, please visit the QCA site www.qca.org.uk/14-19/11-16-schools/index_1191.htm



VESA Working in Partnership with Edexcel/BTEC

This academic year, VESA is working with colleagues from Edexcel/BTEC to provide a range of local support for schools and colleges across Leicester and Leicestershire.

In recognition of the increasing use being made of BTEC programmes across the city and county, we are extending the scope of our work with BTEC by building on previous successful one-off events. These include:

- awareness raising and CPD activities locally hosted and facilitated by VESA as a variation of BTEC national events
- bespoke sessions staffed by BTEC colleagues based around needs identified by practitioners

In recent months, VESA has hosted two well-attended sessions:-

- **Getting Into BTEC** - for those planning to introduce new BTEC courses.
- **Improving Quality in BTEC** - for experienced colleagues seeking to develop strategies to improve attainment.

During the second half of the Spring Term, the following other CPD opportunities will be led by or include input from BTEC/Edexcel.

27th February (pm)

Developing Level 1 Provision through the BTEC Introductory Diploma in Vocational Studies

12th March (All Day)

Developing Effective Assignments for BTEC 1st Courses

19th March (pm)

Functional Skills Development Group (Formally Key Skills Managers)

26th March (All Day)

Vocational Themed CPD - Developing Active Learning

The Functional Skills event will provide a chance for colleagues to be updated on current developments. Functional Skills is an area of very significant development that will impact on all learners. This aspect of 14-19 development will be of direct relevance to centres seeking to offer Specialised Diplomas. In future, Functional Skills will be a formal part of all Diplomas as they are piloted and then rolled out from 2008 onwards. Details of all these VESA events will be sent into centres soon.

Anyone wanting to find out more or to register their interest should contact Megan Jones at the VESA Office.

Spring/Summer Term Conference Dates

Health & Social Care Level 3

Monday 5th March

Student Conference
Gilbert Murray
Conference Centre
University of Leicester

Progress File Conference

Wednesday 28th March
Beaumanor Hall

A/As Level Psychology
Student Conference

Friday 27th April
University of Leicester

Alternative Curriculum
Conference

Thursday 24th May
Beaumanor Hall

VESA 13-19 Curriculum
Conference

Thursday 7th June
Beaumanor Hall

Leicester+shire Personal
Development Programme
Moderation & Planning
Conference

14th & 15th June
Launde Abbey

A/As Level Psychology
Conference

Thursday 21st June
University of Leicester

13 - 19 Education Support Agency

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Leicester shire Aimhigher Features at National Conference

At the recent Action on Access annual conference, held on December 12th December, the Secretary of State for Education, Alan Johnson, specifically mentioned Aimhigher work being undertaken in Leicester shire.

He referred to the summer school which ran for Looked After Children at the three Leicester shire Universities, saying that this was exactly the kind of good practice with under-represented groups that we want to see.

The conference also witnessed the launch of a new series of Aimhigher case studies published by Action on Access and available via their website www.actiononaccess.org

The case studies are entitled "Policy that Works: Widening Participation to Higher Education". Of the four case studies focusing on "Working with Schools", three were Leicester shire based:-

- an event held for Dyslexic students and their parents and carers,
- the Loughborough University based Lego Challenge aimed at primary school pupils,
- the International Space Olympics aimed at post 16 gifted and talented students.

More information about the many Aimhigher events available to city and county schools and colleges can be found on the Leicester Shire Aimhigher website: www.aimhigher-leicester-shire.org.uk

For further information, please contact Neil Stock at the VESA Office

Collaborative off-site vocational provision within the Leicester City Partnership

Work is currently well underway to gauge demand and source capacity for the 2007-09 vocational programme, aimed at students entering year 10 next September. The full provision offer will be notified to schools from mid February onwards and the following timelines will apply:-

Mid February	"Mini prospectus" sent electronically to schools
20th April	Deadline for Applications
May	Interviews with providers to take place
June	Confirmation of successful applicants to schools
June/July	Induction activities

Offers from the providers are wide-ranging at this stage. We are confident that the above process will help to ensure that the right students are recruited to the right programmes.

New for 2007-09

As a "pre-cursor" to the proposed Specialised Diplomas, we are hoping to offer several Level 2 BTEC First Certificates equivalent to 2 GCSE's @ A - C in a number of vocational areas. These First Certificates would be offered on a similar collaborative basis to our NVQs. Depending on demand, viable groups would be made up with students drawn from several institutions, rather than coming just from one centre. This should serve to enhance student entitlement to a wide range of vocational opportunities. Please check the mini prospectus in early February for details.

For further information contact Viv Laxton, Graham Conway or Brian Sanderson at the VESA office

Learning in a vocational context!

GCSE Health & Social Care Student Conference

Last December 222 students from 6 different City and County School/Colleges attended this student conference at Leicester Tigers. 93% of those attending completed evaluations and rated the conference **Excellent/Good**.

Set out below is a sample of student comments focussing on three of the seven workshops presented on the day:



First Aid - Demonstration and Practice - St. John's Ambulance

This single session aimed to raise student awareness of how to reduce risks and deal with emergencies.

St. John's Ambulance qualified trainers showed students:

- How to get people in the Recovery Position
- How to deal with 'bleeding' (applying bandaging)
- Resuscitation C.P.R.

This gave students an opportunity to practice all of these, whilst being observed.

"The overall information provided was excellent and knowledgeable."

"It was really helpful and I learnt a lot."



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE Frank Sly - Centre for the Deaf

An interactive workshop enabling participants to learn some simple means of communication using the basics of British Sign Language.

"I thought this was excellent and gave me a look at how a deaf person communicates."

"Enjoyed the session a lot, one of the best sessions."

Creative Play - Viv Laxton VESA / Leicester College:

This session showed students how to use creative arts to help increase knowledge and understanding about other cultures. It highlighted a multi-cultural approach, learning about people who are different to us through art and craft.

"I liked this lesson because it was doing things."

"I loved it! It was fun!"

VESA would like to thank all those who gave up their time to make this such a successful learning experience for so many students. Please note that the Level 3 Health & Social Care student conference is to be held on Monday March 5th at the University of Leicester.

For further details please contact Kay Ives at the VESA office.



ESF Students make impressive progress

In September 2005, 120 students from 9 schools (Babington, Bosworth, Burleigh, Countesthorpe, Fullhurst, Guthlaxton, Lancaster, Sir Jonathan North, and William Bradford) embarked on an ESF project entitled 'Pathways to Vocational Achievement'.

The aim of the project was to provide a vocationally relevant curriculum to students identified in KS3 as at risk of becoming disengaged and/or underachieving at KS4.

Nearly all of the students recruited have been involved in vocational courses at FE Colleges or with Training Providers and the majority have also participated in extended work experience. The impact of these experiences on many of the students has been significant. Schools are already reporting that most of students are looking to progress to FE to gain further qualifications. In addition, some students have done so well on their extended work placement that they have been offered an apprenticeship with their employer when they finish school.

In addition to the vocational courses, all the students have been following programmes in school designed to improve their basic and social skills. To capture this achievement, schools are using various forms of accreditation including ALAN, ASDAN Youth Award, COPE, Key Skills and Basic Food Hygiene. It is predicted that over 80% of the students will successfully complete the project having gained both vocational and basic skill qualifications.

School and College Project Co-ordinators have reported that the impact of the project on most students has been very positive, as demonstrated through reduced exclusions and better motivation.

Aspects of the ESF Project will be shared with delegates at the Leicester shire Alternative Curriculum Conference (Thursday 24th May, at Beaumanor Hall, 9-3.30pm). Details of this conference will be circulated to all schools in the first week of the summer term.

For further information contact Graham Conway at the VESA office

Jo Sykes gains national recognition for quality work experience programme



Congratulations to our VESA colleague, Jo Sykes, whose work over many years as Director of our WEXA agency has recently gained national recognition.

Jo is pictured receiving The National Standard for Work Experience Organisers Special Achievement Award, "in recognition of her contribution to the organization and delivery of a quality work experience programme". The Award was presented by Professor Prue Huddleston, Director of the Centre for Education and Industry, Warwick University, at the National Work Experience conference in November 2006.