



Dear colleagues

The recent foggy weather provided a helpful analogy for the fog that young people and their parents have to penetrate when trying to make sense of the SEN and LLDD systems, sometimes remaining grounded and at other times circling fruitlessly unable to land at their hoped for destination. The complexity has been reported on recently by the National

Audit Office in 'Oversight of special education for young people aged 16–25' and by Ofsted in 'Progression post-16 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities'. They noted a poor quality placement process, inconsistent data, complex funding systems and a lack of information and impartial guidance. Hopefully these reports will inform the progress of the green paper Support and Aspiration and the pathfinders and other projects that will influence developments.

One of the messages that is loud and clear is the push towards improving employment opportunities for people with learning difficulties and disabilities. Having worked for years to do just that – and seen initiatives come and go without a lot really changing – I think this is very welcome. I also know that ISCs undertake a lot of innovative and successful work in this area. However, there are two important messages that policy makers must understand:

- At this time of economic downturn, when so many young people are unemployed and when the figures for the employment of disabled people are already so poor, it is unreasonable to expect ISCs or any other provider to achieve high levels of for leavers
- Not all ISC learners will see employment as a goal immediately on leaving college – and for some it will not be a goal at all. Improving their life chances will be linked to increased autonomy, better communication skills and greater self-confidence.

Nevertheless, it is important to celebrate the many employment related successes in specialist colleges. These include:

- ✓ Real life vocational training opportunities
- ✓ A wide range of external work experience
- ✓ Successful social enterprises
- ✓ Effective development of employability skills
- ✓ Creative employer engagement strategies
- ✓ Students getting jobs!

Of course employability skills are also very useful life skills, increasing confidence in independence and community participation. And when the economy improves, those students who can, will be well placed to find employment - and working their way through the fog to their ISC place will have been well worthwhile!

Best wishes

Alison

## Family footings launch

I was lucky enough to be invited along to the launch of the new MacIntyre service for families at 10 Downing Street recently. You will all be too well aware of the challenges faced by families as they negotiate the SEN and LLLDD systems, and hopefully this service will help them to find the best outcomes. It chimes well with the findings of the NAO report, and the subsequent discussion at the Public Accounts Committee, about the importance of ensuring there is good information for families about the full range of options.

There is more about the launch and the service here:

<http://www.macintyrecharity.org/news/details/?/MacIntyre%20goes%20to%20Number%2010/1170/>

Alison Boulton

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### Level 3 Team Leadership & Line Management Training for NATSPEC members

Crossfields Institute is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ruskin Mill Educational Trust and has the responsibility to deliver and support the learner training programme across the Trust. As a part of this work, we have been co-ordinating the delivery of an accredited (level 3) Team Leadership and Line Management Programme to staff within the Trust, and we would now like to extend its reach to include anyone from outside of the Trust who may be interested in such a training.

The training itself has (in part) been informed and developed around the experiences of staff employed within Ruskin Mill Educational Trust, and as such we feel it can offer a relevant and accessible approach for other specialist colleges that provide further education for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

We have two 'open' groups, one beginning in January 2012, the other starting in March 2012 - both with limited places available (approx. 8 spaces per group). Costs per learner range from £1100 (where a group of 4 or more are booked together) to £1195 for individual bookings.

Please find attached some further information about what is being offered and a link (below) to that place on our website which offers more information on the course in question.

[http://www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/education\\_and\\_training/tourmaline/](http://www.crossfieldsinstitute.com/education_and_training/tourmaline/)

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Tourmaline Level 3 -  
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Tourmaline Course  
Poster.pdf



Crossfields &  
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## Congratulations to Derwen College and Strathmore College

JISC TechDis is thrilled to announce that there are multiple winners of the JISC TechDis OASES Award for Institutional Progress on Equality using Technology.

There were six organisations that demonstrated an exemplary approach to embedding accessibility into institutional policy thereby ensuring equality of access to teaching and learning for all their students.

These included two higher education institutions, two further education colleges, a specialist college and an adult community organisation. The same criteria was applied to all entrants and the top six scores were so close that we decided they all deserved to be recognised as winners.

Congratulations to the winning entrants listed below:

Adult Community Learning (ACL) Essex and the Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER),  
Anglia Ruskin University,  
Cumbernauld College (Equalities data tool)

**Derwen College,**

Forth Valley College,  
Trinity College Dublin.

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The Online Accessibility Self Evaluation Service (OASES) is a free online tool to help staff in different roles understand and appreciate their influence on inclusive accessible practices. Many organisations have used the tool to great effect and its holistic approach helps embed inclusive practice through the organisation. At JISC TechDis we believed there were many organisations that had already made great progress in this area and the OASES Award enabled us to surface some of the excellent practice taking place in the UK and overseas.

In addition to the six winners, there were six entrants that achieved 'highly commended'.

Coleg Llandrillo  
Cumbernauld College(Logitech Webcam Avatars)  
South Lanarkshire College  
**Strathmore College**  
SussexCoast College Hastings

As all the OASES Award entrants know, there is a world of difference between simply providing support for learners/students with disabilities and creating an inclusive environment where barriers are reduced so that support needs are fewer.

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## **Chris W. Berry – available for consultancy work**

“External” observations of teaching and learning, systems analysis, organisational development, specific project development.

Nearly 30 years’ managerial experience in ISCs, MSc in Systemic Thinking, over five years experience as Additional Inspector.

**Please contact:** [h4tchriswberry@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:h4tchriswberry@yahoo.co.uk) or **07702 403106**

**Natspec endorsements -  
events, consultants or programmes advertised in this bulletin are not necessarily endorsed by Natspec.**

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## **Autism Conference, February 20th, The Medical Institution, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool**

I thought you might be interested in a very exciting conference on autism that we’re organising in Liverpool at the Medical Institution on February 20th. We’re a group of experts on autism, as it’s lived, and all of us have personal experience of autism, and want to make our expertise and the latest knowledge about autism easily accessible to as many people as possible. We’re trying to make a difference to the way autism is viewed by everyone in the UK – and perhaps the world! You can find more details on our website at [www.autisticintelligence.org](http://www.autisticintelligence.org) (click on conferences, but feel free to look at the whole site) Prices are from £40 for the day for the unwaged rising to £125 for professionals, and you can book on the site, or send us an email if you’d like an invoice or if you want to make a block booking.

This is a chance-in-a-lifetime conference as it brings to the UK, on one of his rare visits, one of the exceptional world experts on autism, Theo Peeters, from Belgium. Educated to Masters' level in both his home country, and in the UK, Theo also spent a year in the USA as an intern with the TEACCH program, returning to Belgium to transform attitudes to autism over the whole of Europe from the 1980s onwards. He is truly one of the great pioneers, and an inspirational speaker. He will present at this conference alongside his colleague Hilde De Clercq, lecturer and author, and the mother of a young man on the autism.

Joining them will be Dr Olga Bogdashina, originally from Russia, who has worked with Theo. She now lives in the UK, and passionately shares, in books and presentations, her awareness of autism’s sensory issues, and of the communication differences we encounter in autism. Like Hilde, she has a son on the autism spectrum.

There is also the chance to hear the renowned Dr Jacqui Jackson, mother of eight children, five of whom are diagnosed with autism or with related cluster conditions. She is an author, consultant to Research Autism, and works closely with the NAS. Two years ago she was awarded her PhD on the sensory aspects of autism.

This promises to be a unique event for those on the spectrum, their parents, and all professionals who may come into contact with people on the autism spectrum. It will provide insights which are too rarely offered by those without personal experience of the condition. Conferences where this exceptional world class level of knowledge and expertise, are shared with an audience, are very few indeed. Our conference at York, due to be held at the end of this month, sold out almost 4 weeks before the event.

[www.autisticintelligence.org](http://www.autisticintelligence.org)

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## NIACE Training Courses

### **Making it work:**

### **embedding a supported employment approach in vocational provision for people with learning difficulties**

**Tuesday 24 January 2012**

**Leicester**

**9.30am - 4.00pm**

**Event fee per person (includes sandwich lunch, tea/coffee):**

**£145 (NIACE Members)**

**£170 (Non NIACE Members)**

**NB: NIACE does not charge VAT on event fees.**

### [Reserve a place online](#)

Originally based on the *Making it Work* book, this one day training has been further developed following a series of nine regional courses run in 2010 with the Department of Health's Valuing Employment Now team. The course now includes updated information on policy, practice and resources on supported employment.

#### **Who would benefit from attending?**

Staff and managers working with people with learning difficulties in vocational provision.

#### **Training aim**

This practical and interactive training session aims to equip you with the knowledge, skills and confidence to provide effective support to people with learning difficulties in vocational provision.

#### **What this workshop will do**

By the end of the session you will have:

- increased your knowledge of the context of the work against the policy backdrop;
- be familiar with the underpinning principles of the supported employment approach;
- examined the key elements of supported employment;
- explored case studies of learning providers using a supported employment approach and how to audit your own provision against the examples;
- considered who your key partners need to be to develop the work; and
- identified some practical approaches to involve learners in the process.

### [Find out more and book your place now](#)

Email: [events@niace.org.uk](mailto:events@niace.org.uk)

Tel: 0116 285 9661 or 0116 204 2833

## **Demonstrating Impact for Quality Improvement:**

### **Using the five-stage process (RARPA) and the Common Inspection Framework (CIF)**

**Wednesday 18 January 2012**

**Leeds**

**9.30am - 3.30pm**

**Event fee per person (includes sandwich lunch, tea/coffee):**

**£145 (NIACE Members)**

**£170 (Non NIACE Members)**

**NB: NIACE does not charge VAT on event fees.**

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## [Reserve a place online](#)

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### **Are you responsible for quality improvement in adult learning?**

This training will be particularly relevant to staff responsible for quality improvement in Adult Learning in all sectors that are inspected by OFSTED.

#### **Previous participants who have attended the training said:**

*"Excellent delivery. Excellent clarity of complex information"*

Julie Cawson, Key Support Co-ordinator, Grimsby Institute of Further Education

*"Probably the best training session I have attended, organised and delivered by NIACE!"*

Andrew McManus, Quality Officer, Blackburn and Darwen Borough Council

#### **Training Aims**

To enable participants to develop an understanding of how the five-stage process of recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) impacts on:

- learners and learning;
- monitoring and reporting on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through self-assessment;
- corroboration of evidence for external evaluation.

#### **What are the benefits of attending "Demonstrating Impact for Quality Improvement" training?**

By the end of the day participants should be better able to:

- understand current and possible future policy relating to the staged process;
- develop/use RARPA to monitor and report on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment;
- analyse approaches to quality assurance such as observation of teaching and learning (OTL), individual learning plans (ILP's), internal moderation and self assessment. [Book now](#)

Email: [events@niace.org.uk](mailto:events@niace.org.uk)

Tel: 0116 285 9661 or 0116 204 2833

### **Apprenticeships**

NIACE continues to develop its work around Apprenticeships - which have been one of the few areas to receive a real-terms increase in public spending since the Coalition Government came into office. Figures announced on 27 October 2011 show that the total number of apprenticeship starts in England in 2010/11 was 442,700 - more than 175,000 of whom were aged 25 and over.

This growth has not been without controversy with questions being raised about the number of existing employees 'converting' to apprenticeships to draw down public funding; about apprenticeships being compressed into short periods of time through extensive use of APL and about the very purposes of the apprenticeship process and what it means for people of different ages, working at different levels in different sectors. While training providers and colleges are concerned with questions about public funding rates and employer contributions for training, employers may be influenced more by their wage costs (a TUC survey found that on average, the gross salary for apprentices is £12,633 pa). It is important to understand that apprenticeships are not a government 'scheme' but a contract of employment and that the 'market' in apprenticeships is shaped largely by the availability of public funding and the impact this has on training associations, providers and colleges. Readers who wish to contribute to NIACE's thinking around the subject of apprenticeships are invited to e-mail me at the address below.

Alastair Thomson  
Principal Policy and Advocacy Officer  
NIACE

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## Easy read information about eye health

SeeAbility's [www.lookupinfo.org](http://www.lookupinfo.org) has produced two new easy read factsheets about Diabetes. 'Diabetes and Your Eyes' and 'Diabetic Eye Screening' are now available at

[http://www.lookupinfo.org/easy\\_read\\_information/easy\\_read\\_eye\\_conditions\\_information.aspx](http://www.lookupinfo.org/easy_read_information/easy_read_eye_conditions_information.aspx)

For other easy read eye health fact sheets go to

[http://www.lookupinfo.org/easy\\_read\\_information/default.aspx](http://www.lookupinfo.org/easy_read_information/default.aspx)

Easy read health messages about the prevalence of sight problems amongst people with learning disabilities at

[http://www.seeability.org/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2011/p/1\\_public\\_health\\_messages\\_for\\_pwld\\_easy\\_read.pdf](http://www.seeability.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2011/p/1_public_health_messages_for_pwld_easy_read.pdf)

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### Information from SCIE (Social care institute for excellence)

#### 1. Making social care more accessible for adults with autism

Easy read summary

<http://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide43/files/guide43.pdf>

#### 2. scie learning disability information

<http://www.scie.org.uk/topic/people/peoplewithlearningdisabilities>

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### Healthy living information

Arc Cymru have undertaken a number of initiatives around healthy lifestyles for people with learning difficulties, available here: <http://arcuk.org.uk/cymru/>

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### Improving Health and Lives Website Relaunch

The Improving Health and Lives Learning Disability Observatory website has been redesigned to make it easier to find data and reports on learning disabilities in England: <http://www.improvinghealthandlives.org.uk/>

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### BME Guide

An updated version of Reaching and Supporting Diverse Communities: a guide to meeting the needs of people with learning disabilities and family carers from newly arrived, Black, Asian and other Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, is now available to download free from

[http://www.hft.org.uk/Family\\_Carer\\_Support/BME\\_Resource\\_Guide](http://www.hft.org.uk/Family_Carer_Support/BME_Resource_Guide)

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### National Autistic Society Roadshow

School years are a vital time for helping children with autism develop strategies to understand themselves, keynote speaker **Dr Glenys Jones** said at the second [National Autistic Society Roadshow](#). Speaking about how to improve lives and outcomes for those with the condition, **Dr Jones, lecturer and researcher at University of Birmingham's Autism Centre for Education and Research**, said it was crucial for them to get good attainment because, "the better you're qualified as an adult the more likely you are to get employed."

Of particular interest to ISCs is the input by **Josh Muggleton, Student and Autism Speaker / Writer** on Life on the inside: school challenges for people with autism. Josh talks about his very positive experiences at Farleigh Further Education College Frome. You can download his presentation from the link above.

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### An evaluation of approaches to commissioning young people's services

This small-scale Ofsted survey examines approaches to the commissioning of services for young people in 12 local authority areas and reports on the experience of national organisations involved in this work. There are references to young people with LDD throughout the report, which is available here:

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/evaluation-of-approaches-commissioning-young-peoples-services>

## **Inclusive Learning in Further and Higher Education (F&HE):**

Innovations in research, practice and learner engagement

Celebrating the contribution of Peter Lavender to the field of inclusive learning

**Thursday 16 February 2012;** The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

This conference is brought to you jointly by the Learning and Skills Improvement Agency, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and The Open University: three organisations with a demonstrated understanding, expertise and commitment to inclusive high quality education for disabled learners. The conference recognises how far we have come in the past 15 years, and focuses on the innovations and opportunities that will lead to further mainstreaming of inclusive learning. In particular, this conference shares research and practice in F&HE, with a view to understanding what the sectors can learn from each other, and importantly, what researchers and practitioners can learn from engagement with disabled learners. Through research, reflective practice and learner engagement, our understanding of a wide range of learning needs and the intersection between disability and other characteristics and circumstances, will be enhanced.

The conference aims to:

consider the role of inclusive adult learning in F&HE in the past 15 years

share innovative research and practice in inclusive learning in F&HE

inspire further innovation to shape future policy and practice in inclusive learning

reinforce the importance and value of learner engagement in developing understandings and approaches to inclusive learning.

Speakers include:

Will Swann, Director, Students, The Open University

Dr. Peter Lavender OBE FRSA, Senior Research Fellow, NIACE

Dr. Lesley Dee, formerly Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

Professor Alan Tuckett OBE, President, International Council for Adult Education

Dr. Liz Marr, Director of the Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum, The Open University

The conference will be of interest to individuals and organisations across the full spectrum of adult learning: higher education, further education, workplace learning and community-based learning. It will be of particular benefit to:

- Senior policy makers
- Inclusive education researchers
- Practitioners and learners who advocate for active learner engagement
- Those responsible for teaching methodologies
- Student support staff
- Individuals developing curriculum.

Workshops and presentations at the conference will focus on three themes: Learners' Voices, Curriculum, Teaching and Quality and Policy, Strategy and Research and will include examples of innovative research and practice focussing on various aspects of the future of inclusive learning.

To learn more or to reserve a place, visit the conference website:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/campaigns-events/events/inclusive-learning-in-further-and-higher-education>

Enquiries to NIACE Events Team: 0116 204 2833; [events@niace.org.uk](mailto:events@niace.org.uk)

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## **Natspec website**

Please remember to make full use of the information available on the Natspec website. In the presentations section, you will find a wide range of presentations and supporting information from recent Natspec events, and there are recent publications in that section too.

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## Situations Vacant

If you wish to advertise posts on the Natspec sits vac web page, please send them to Andrew Harris - [andrew.harris@derwen.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.harris@derwen.ac.uk) , the cost is a mere £25.00 to cover admin. This service is only available to Natspec members.

Any problems accessing the Principal's forum contact Julian: [webmaster@jewelion.com](mailto:webmaster@jewelion.com)

Please let us have any news, events or job vacancies that you want placing on the website.

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## Natspec Directory

All member colleges/organisations should have received 25 copies of the Natspec Directory – if you have not yet received your copies please contact Dawn Williams at Derwen College – contact details below.

To request a Natspec directory please contact:

Queen Alexandra College  
0121 428 5050

[allformats@qac.ac.uk](mailto:allformats@qac.ac.uk)

Derwen College  
01691 661234

[dawn.williams@derwen.ac.uk](mailto:dawn.williams@derwen.ac.uk)

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*Andrew Harris November 2011*