

Partnerships for the future

Working together is often the key for learning providers across the UK. Brian Quinn, chair of the Merseyside Hairdressing Forum (MHF) and director of Training Plus Merseyside, talks to Habia News about how Merseyside's competing hairdressing learning providers have established common ground and are undertaking pioneering work for the benefits of all in the sector.



Brian Quinn

What is the Merseyside Hairdressing Forum?

'It's a work-based consortium of learning providers and colleges on Merseyside that meet and collaborate regularly. There are eleven members - between us we offer a range of services to learners and employers including Apprenticeships, and from September 2009, the Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies.

When was the MHF set up and why?

We started in 2005, supported by Greater Merseyside Learning Providers Federation (GMLPF) and the Learning and Skills Council, as part of a project to develop local provider networks to support skills development in Merseyside's key employment sectors, including hairdressing.

What are the MHF's key aims?

We aim to jointly increase employer engagement with programmes like Apprenticeships, and to improve the quality of training by sharing best practice. We also develop strategies to address new projects such as the Diploma in Hair and Beauty Studies.

What benefits does the MHF bring?

The collaboration impacts on our overall success rates, which are now higher than the national average. If there was any

"MHF have really made Apprenticeships visible on Merseyside with events like Capital of Coiffure giving employers a chance to see the outstanding skills and professionalism of local apprentices." **Paul Daley, business manager, Barbara Daley.**

"The good working relations that have developed between work-based learning providers and colleges on MHF have provided a firm foundation for the success of the Diploma on Merseyside." **Alison Gibson, chief executive, Michael John of Liverpool.**

"Although we are business competitors on Merseyside, we have all gained from Peer Review and sharing best practice. There is a wealth of experience in our group and we look forward to working on Self Assessment in the New Year." **Sarah Collinge, Andrew Collinge**

Members of the Merseyside Hairdressing Forum: Andrew Collinge, Headlines, Herbert of Liverpool, Knowsley Community College, Liverpool Community College, Michael John of Liverpool, Mode Training, Scientiam, St Helens College, Training Plus Merseyside and Wirral Metropolitan College.

competitive mistrust between members, that's long gone and we're able to focus on maximising joint resources to raise the quality and profile of local work-based learning. Learners and employers benefit from improved services and consistency in local hairdressing training standards and practices, regardless of which provider they use, thanks to MHF's development of common protocols.

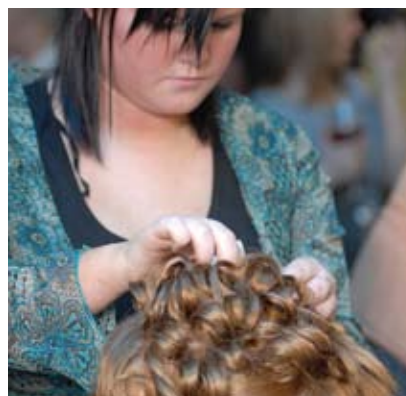
Tell us about some of MHF's key achievements

In 2006, MHF introduced a portability protocol which all members have signed up to. If a learner moves from one provider to another, the providers have agreed to communicate and share relevant information so the learner doesn't have to repeat assessment processes or undertake learning they've already done. Evidence shows this protocol has created a more streamlined experience for the learner whilst ensuring minimum disruption to their employer. More recently, MHF undertook a courageous project: a peer review supported by GMLPF and funded through the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). In the project, MHF members observed and reviewed each other's teaching, following guidance provided by Ofsted. The exercise has encouraged transparency between members as well as highlighting individual providers' strengths and areas for improvement.

What future challenges does MHF face?

We expect to be addressing the impact of the credit crunch on employment and training in our sector locally, monitoring the effect of the Apprenticeship minimum wage increase, and of course embracing the introduction of the Diploma. We'll also be conducting the next stage of our peer review which will see us evaluating each other's management and leadership practices. I know this will prove invaluable for us in the context of Framework for Excellence as we prepare, along with every college and provider in the country, to become fully and effectively self-regulating.'

For further information on the work of Merseyside Hairdressing Forum visit www.skillsforums.com/hairdressing



A learner at Training Plus