



Employers Newsletter

Welcome to the first edition of the North West & North Wales regional Newsletter, specifically for employers of CIPFA Members, Students and prospective Students.

As part of a new initiative of 'Engaging Employers' the society is considering the contribution made by employers towards the work of the Institute both nationally and locally and in doing so are asking three questions:

- What do employers need to do support CIPFA, which does include supporting the professional accountancy qualification (PAQ)
- What do employers want to get out of the Institute
- How can we ensure these are both considered and agreed

In ascertaining what yourselves as employers would want out of the Institute, this may be broad and on a number of levels but as an assumption, this may be:

- A quality training programme and PAQ for students
- A professional body that provides policy and technical support and expertise at a number of levels
- A professional body with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements, with a scheme of professional ethics and with disciplinary standards

To deliver these requirements the North West & North Wales Society works in conjunction with the Institute nationally to provide a broad range of services to the membership and part of this role must therefore also to be meet the demands and challenges of employers.

In meeting these challenges and delivering employers requirements, the Institute relies on using its membership through volunteering; however many of the functions of the Institute and the role of the volunteer will support members and employers alike. If a member benefits by volunteering in many cases so will the employer and this forms part of a continuous loop or circle of dependence. Employers have requirements met by the Institute for all, provided in many cases by members of the same organisations, and this fact is not always recognised.

A perfect solution maybe? For this to work employers need to support this approach and logic and this means allowing members and students to participate in Institute initiatives and activities e.g.

- Continuing or increasing the number of trainees put through the PAQ
- Release members and students to attend events and conferences
- Release members and students to attend boards, panels and working groups such as Technical Information Service (TIS) and Statistical Information Service (SIS)
- Examiner opportunities
- Allow members to volunteer on regional activities
- Providing varied opportunities for CPD

Functions of the North West & North Wales Society

The NW & NW Society has five individual groups that offer courses, seminars, formal training, news and networking opportunities to all CIPFA members and students. These groups are:

- Audit Advisory Group
- Senior Management Group
- Student Forum
- Southern Section (south of the Mersey to Gwynedd/Anglesey)
- Northern Section (north of the Mersey to Cumbria including the Isle of Man)

Audit Advisory Group

The Audit Advisory Group covers the whole of the NW & NW Region. It is a very successful group, attracting large numbers to events organised. The group offer formal training courses on topics such as fraud, presentation skills, computer audit and risk management among along with a full day AGM and annual weekend school

Senior Management Group

The Senior Management Group is all about offering opportunities for networking, learning and development. Although the membership is aimed at senior managers the group is open to all. The group meet 5 times a year and cover a wide range of topical issues

Student Forum

The Student Forum frequently arrange events throughout the year on topics designed to help students with revision, offer techniques to pass exams, raise awareness of general public sector developments and to have an opportunity to network with people outside their own organisation.

Southern Section

The Southern Section organise three half day seminars during the year that offer a variety of short topical presentations aimed at updating members and students on current developments and providing an insight into relevant topics that they might not generally deal with on a day to day basis.

Northern Section

The newly formed Northern Section has so far provided one full day seminar on Risk Management, providing experience of the subject from different perspectives to enable attendees to decide the most relevant and appropriate way to tackle the subject for their own organisation. The Northern Section are now providing three seminars in 2007 which will provide topical update sessions.

Other Initiatives

I am sure you will all be aware of the general Newsletter that is distributed to all Members and Students that provides useful information on what is happening in the region, forthcoming events, reviews from events that people were not able to attend and other helpful articles e.g. exam techniques

This year the society was awarded with the CIPFA Website of the Year award following an investment in developing the site to make it more user friendly, accessible and informative for all members and students. As result of winning the award, the opportunity has arisen to develop the site further and plans are in place to develop an on line booking system, a user survey to ascertain what functions would further aid members and students and a comprehensive section for volunteers that would unsure they minimise time spent on the administrative functions of volunteering.

Continuing Professional Development

From 1 January 2007 CPD will be mandatory for **all** members regardless of when they became a member.

As employers you will most probably be CCAB members yourselves and will already know the benefits of carrying out CPD. Within your organisations, you will be demonstrating a commitment in your staff by undertaking some form of staff performance or appraisal scheme. If you are not already, you may be able to use this scheme as an employer accredited CPD scheme. This would mean duplication would be minimised for your staff in compiling their CPD plan and record twice.

The NW & NW has a specific CPD Coordinator who can assist with setting up an employer accredited scheme and can provide support to organisations and individuals in compiling their CPD with the use of the CIPFA Learning Centre that allows you to record and share your CPD requirements on line

CPD activities can be carried out in the workplace, at home or externally. These are not costly and the society offers all their events at a reasonable price, with the prime objective of breaking even rather than making a profit. It is clear that delegates find the events beneficial even going as far as to fund themselves to attend as one delegate commented after a recent event:

“A very varied and interesting agenda, so much so that I paid for myself to attend”

Activities provide by the Institute that qualify for CPD are:

- Contributing to articles in the Newsletter
- Attending conferences, seminars or training events
- Being a panel or board member
- Marking exam papers
- Volunteering as part of the regional activities
- Presenting a topic as a speaker at an event

Investing in staff to carry out these activities will aid with succession planning allowing you to keep the resource you have invested in, in your organisation. It is appreciated that releasing members and students does take time out of an already pressured workplace, but if planned and structured, the time invested in these staff would generate a greater return for the employer in the long run, with further experience, knowledge and understanding being retained within the organisation.

New Members

Following their qualification and acceptance to membership, how to do ensure your new Members do not stagnate and keep up to date with current public sector finance issues? As part of a staff development and appraisal system, you will obviously be assessing their needs on a regular basis including planning successors for existing staff that move on. CIPFA locally can offer a host of activities to keep staff up to date and fresh to ensure your investment in them is repaid.

New Members are evidently proud to have completed their studies and be a part of the Institute as attendance at the Annual Dinner where new members are presented with their certificates is increasing. How many of you as employers support your staff by attending the Annual Dinner to witness this prestigious occasion?

Attendance Statistics

In 2005 attendance **increased** by:

- 22% at Regional Events or AGM's
- 13% at student training events
- 35% at Audit training events
- 39% at Senior Management seminars
- 12% for all training, seminars and conferences

In 2005 31% of all attendees were first time attendees

These statistics prove that your employees find the events beneficial, and as employers, as your own attendance has increased at Senior Management seminar immensely you will know first hand the advantage gained

Yet despite these increases, there were only 1,058 delegates attending all events in 2005, compared with a membership in the region of around 2,200.

This also does not mean that there were over 1,000 different attendees, as inevitably, the same delegates will attend more than one event

Specific initiatives have been arranged to encourage attendance e.g. reducing the cost of student places at seminars and **all** student training sessions are free

Volunteers and prestige

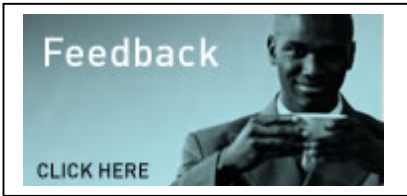
Volunteering is a two-way process. Not only do volunteers contribute to the work of CIPFA, but they can also get something in return. Volunteering offers an excellent opportunity for personal and professional development and offers huge benefits in meeting fellow practitioners away from the workplace as it provides a chance to swap experiences, learn what other organisations are doing to manage the introduction of new legislation etc, or hear about new initiatives.

As an employer you will see benefits to your organisation from your staff becoming involved in voluntary activities. Students will gain valuable experience that could help them towards their qualification; more established employees will benefit from sharing experiences with fellow practitioners and hearing about new initiatives.

Employees who are involved in the development of new professional guidance for their colleagues will have early access to information on key developments and innovations in the public finance field. The profile of your organisation will be raised where your employees are at the forefront of these initiatives.

Promoting involvement with CIPFA activities to your employees delivers the clear message that you recognise the value of their qualification and that you are committed to maintaining and developing the professional competence of your staff. For an Investors in People accredited organisation, or those seeking accreditation, an employee's volunteer involvement and commitment to continuing professional development will help achieve and maintain accredited status.

'I find my volunteer involvement stimulating and beneficial to my employer. It is also good to participate in debate which is to the benefit of fellow practitioners. Being at the cutting edge of policy is very interesting.'



Employees Perceptions

At all events, the Society collated feedback from delegates to ascertain how we can provide best value with maximum benefit. We act on the feedback given by arranging presentations on topics requested, changing the venue to allow a location within

reach, scheduling the timing so as not to clash with pressures of work, exams or holidays. Delegates do however realise the need to attend events to ensure they are kept updated and this is obvious following the comment received by one delegate

“Work deadlines may prevent future attendance but I feel that the benefits would assist work performance so I would always try to attend”

More often than not, speakers will be employed within your own organisations and have given their time to attend an event. We provide the delegate feedback rating to the speakers to assist with their future performance should we use them again. This almost provides a 360 degree appraisal to speakers that they can take forward in their own organisation to enhance their skills at work, which ultimately is a direct benefit to you as their employers

So far during 2006 the average feedback received from delegates who attended events was as follows:

Timing of events	88% Excellent or Good
Venue of events	93% Excellent or Good
Value for Money	97% Excellent or Good

Networking Opportunities

Best Practice..... Partnerships.....Collaboration.....

Words used all the time that we are expected to take advantage of. Easy if you are part of regional network group or a member of a regional society, but how do the rest of your staff actually put this into action?

Attending a regional event or being part of a panel, board or executive is an excellent way to meet colleagues from similar organisations and ask these types of questions, find out what their counterparts do, and identify how to work smarter. Reinventing the wheel is time-consuming and not cost effective. Following one event a delegate commented:

“the delegate list could include each delegate’s area of work and e-mailed out in advance. The reason I mention this is because I find I have very little contact with Accountants in other organisations who do similar work...we could all help each other by sharing methods of working and best practice or just bouncing ideas around”

Progress to Date

If you attended the AGM or have read the Society Annual Report or Newsletter, you will already be aware of the ‘Engaging Employers’ initiative. However, if you are not aware of this, then this newsletter is designed specifically for you. As part of the initiative, several actions have already been put into place to find out what you, as employers want for your employees and how we can assist you to provide it:

- Meetings across the region with Societies of local Treasurers and Chief Officers to discuss the initiative and a way forward

- The Society President presented a Best Practice Session on the initiative at the Conference for the CIPFA Regional volunteers in Glasgow this autumn. This enabled other regions to use the approach in their own areas to gain successes in supporting employers by providing opportunities for students and members
- The newly formed Northern Section held their first full day seminar in September that received tremendous support from employers and members alike as it was fully subscribed at an early stage. The profile of the speakers at the seminar demonstrated local employers' commitment to supporting the section and sustaining its existence
- The Presidential Address this year was specifically about the initiative and the Society President gave a exciting speech at the Annual General Meeting last March to explain the opportunities available for employers to participate. This speech was also included in the Annual Report which is available to download from the website
- This Newsletter is the first of a series aimed specifically at employers to inform you what guidance and support the Society provides to students and members and how you can access it to help your employees to develop, in turn helping yourselves to maintain an effective organisation

Next Steps

What happens next? Well, that is really up to you. The society will continue to support its students and members by hosting events, offering networking and volunteering opportunities, providing a newsletter and keeping students and members updated on topical issues via the website. We will also continue with this newsletter to update you of progress made on the 'Engaging Employers' initiative.

We would like to hear from you as to how you think is best to support your employees and what barriers and constraints you feel are in the way of their development. How we do this will be determined by your responses, however a few ideas could be:

- Some form of survey
- An employers workshop
- A network group (e.g. continue with established Chief Officers Groups)

It is recognised that many of you as employers do support your finance staff in terms of attending events, releasing volunteers and providing CPD opportunities and this extends to employers in non finance departments. As a Society we pay tribute to your commitment to the ongoing development of your staff through the support of the Institute and look forward to continuing successes in the future.

Prospective Students

If you have any prospective students in your organisation interested in studying for the CIPFA qualification, information is available on the CIPFA website at www.cipfa.org.uk/students/employers

Liverpool John Moores University offers training provision locally and if you would like further information about what courses the University provides, then contact Gemma Coleman at Liverpool John Moores University at g.coleman@ljmu.ac.uk or telephone: 0151 231 3857 for an information pack.

The CIPFA course offered at Liverpool John Moores is on a modular basis over 3 years and is delivered by experienced lecturers and practitioners. Students who are exempt from Management Accounting and Financial Accounting at Certificate level could start studying for the other Certificate modules in February 2007

2007 North West & North Wales Events

Month	Date	Event	Contact
January	15 th & 16 th	Basic Computer Audit Course, Halton Stadium, Widnes	Audit Group
January	26 th	Audit Group AGM, venue tbc	Audit Group
January	29 th & 30 th	Advanced Computer Audit Course, Halton Stadium, Widnes	Audit Group
February	2 nd	Half Day Seminar (am), Williamson Art Gallery, Birkenhead	Southern Members
February	9 th	'Change Drivers' half day seminar, Blackpool FC	Northern Members
February	tbc	* Investigative Interviewing, Wirral Education Centre	Audit Group
February	tbc	IPDS Event	Student Forum
March	9 th – 11 th	Audit Weekend School, Hilton Hotel, Blackpool	Audit Group
March	22 nd	* Risk Based Auditing, venue tbc	Audit Group
March	23 rd	Society AGM, Old Trafford, Manchester	Society Secretary
April	20 th	Half Day Seminar (am), Manchester	Southern Members
April	tbc	Exam/Technical Seminar for certificate & diploma students	Student Forum
April	tbc	Final test Seminar – examiners	Student Forum
May	11 th	Topical Issues full day seminar, Lancaster University	Northern Members
June	22 nd	Audit Summer Seminar, Aintree Racecourse	Audit Group
June	28 th	* Introduction to Internal Audit	Audit Group
July	13 th	Half Day Seminar (am), North Wales	Southern Members
July	tbc	Fylde Trophy Quiz, Manchester	Student Forum
September	7 th	Topical Issues half day seminar, Kendal	Northern Members
Sept/Oct	tbc	Outward Bound Weekend	Student Forum
October	11 th -12 th	Facilitation, Communication & Presentation Skills, venue tbc	Audit Group
October	12 th	Regional Conference & Annual Dinner (venue tbc)	Society Secretary
October	tbc	Exam/Technical Seminar for certificate & diploma students	Student Forum
November	tbc	Final test Seminar – examiners	Student Forum
November	16 th	* Fraud Forum (tbc)	Audit Group

Please note items marked with * are provisional at present. Please keep a look out on the website at <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/regions/nw/events.cfm> for further details. All event details will be e-mailed out nearer the time

Contact the Society

Newsletter/General Contact

If you have any comments about the content of this Newsletter, or would like more information regarding the engaging employers initiative, please contact the Society vice Chair Ken Finch on 01492 576201 or at ken.finch@conwy.gov.uk

Volunteers

To find out more about volunteer opportunities with the Institute in general, please download a volunteer pack from the main website at <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/volunteers> or use the e-mail page on the website where your correspondence will receive a response within 48 hours at <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/regions/nw/email.cfm>

Past Events

To read reviews from past events and to see pictures of new members receiving their certificates at the Annual Dinner in October, visit the Society website at <http://www.cipfa.org.uk/regions/nw/>

Continuing Professional Development/CIPFA Learning Centre

For information about CPD and how your organisation can become an employer accredited organisation, contact the regional CPD Coordinator Steve Rowley on 0151 666 3525 or at stephenrowley@wirral.gov.uk

Students

For information on students or how to become a student, contact the Chair of the Student Forum, Edith Poon at e-poon@audit-commission.gov.uk

Many thanks for your support

Chris Tidswell
North West & North Wales Society President



CIPFA

