THE NATIONAL EMPLOYER SERVICE RESOURCE PACK

Version 2 (June 2008)
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THE NATIONAL EMPLOYER SERVICE
1. INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This resource pack will help you to develop your knowledge and understanding of the National Employer Service (NES).

It has been put together by the Learning and Skills Council at a national and regional level.

The pack aims to:

- Give more in-depth knowledge of solutions which can be brokered through Train to Gain and Apprenticeships.
- Help you deliver the Train to Gain and Apprenticeships service more confidently.

This pack is NOT intended:

- To act as a marketing tool for visits to employers.
- To provide Brokers with a detailed guide to NES provision, funding and provider infrastructure.

After reading through the resource materials, you may find that you have some outstanding questions. In this case, you should contact NES direct who are located at LSC National office, in Coventry.

Once you have familiarised yourself with the content, it can also be used as a reference guide, to be dipped in and out of when required.
Once you have read this pack you should be able to:

- Understand what NES is and how it operates.
- Be aware of NES provision, funding and the eligibility criteria for large employers.
- Understand the referral protocols (regions to NES and NES to regions) and therefore be able to ensure employer needs are met appropriately.
- Be aware of the business issues/needs of large employers and the potential training and development undertaken in large organisations.

Knowing about the National Employer Service will help you to meet the Skills Broker Standard. The information below shows which elements of the Skills Broker Standard are covered by this pack.

a2 Identify specific skill solutions in relation to business goals/challenges: understand the client’s skills needs and identify appropriate solutions

a3 Proactively network and search new solutions: understand what training solutions are available

a4 Help the client to critically assess a training provider’s offer: present a number of options to the client

b3 The framework of training and development delivery: funding packages, eligibility of employers and individuals
FACTSHEET

This section provides a background to The National Employer Service, what it is, who is eligible, how it will work within Train to Gain and Apprenticeships and how to access further information.

What is The National Employer Service?
The National Employer Service (NES) supports national employers with more than 5,000 employees.

NES was set up by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to provide a single focused point of contact for large, national multi-site employers.

It is unique in that it provides direct funding to employers to support their workforce development. It does this through an employer contract, which enables the employer to deliver training themselves and/or choose a provider to deliver it on their behalf.

NES has responsibility for managing the contracting arrangements with large employers and with providers that act on behalf of these employers. It does this through an account management process, i.e. one account manager manages the relationship and is the single point of contact for the employer.

In addition, NES seeks to work strategically with large employers to meet their workforce development needs, represent their views and strengthen linkages between employer needs and new emerging skills development.

Government Ministers see the NES as having a pivotal role in driving forward its skills agenda. Its aim is to improve the skills of the UK workforce to ensure the UK can compete in the global market. NES is therefore tasked with getting public commitment from employers to undertake workforce development via the signing of the Skills Pledge.

The Skills Pledge

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs). The purpose is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company/organisation.

The Pledge can be made by the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, owner/manager or other Board member, on behalf of the organisation. It is a corporate commitment covering the whole company/organisation. For those employees who do not already have a full Level 2 qualification, the Government will provide funding to help them gain basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as their first full Level 2 qualification.
The Skills Pledge is open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

**Facts and Figures**
- In 2007/08 there were over 150,000 Apprenticeship target completions funded by the LSC, the target volume completions for NES were 27,942.
- The target completions for NVQ2 in 2007/08 were 206,800 for the LSC and 14,600 for NES.

**Who is eligible to work with NES?**
NES contracts may be available to:

- Large national employers with over 5,000 employees and a centralised personnel and payment system, with the potential to take at least 200 learners in year 1
- Providers acting on behalf of these national employers
- Providers set up by employers to provide a service to a specific industry sector

For more detail about eligibility please see the *Eligibility Checklist* in section 3 of the pack

**What does NES offer?**

Even if an employer has over 5,000 employees and meets the other eligibility criteria it is the employer’s choice as to whether they work with NES or with a regional brokerage organisation.

The NES offer and funding will focus on:

- Apprenticeships 16 – 18 and 19+
- First full NVQ Level 2
- Skills for Life Entry Level 1, 2 and 3
- Skills for Life programmes, as mentioned above will be funded by NES and do not need to be embedded (i.e. delivered with an NVQ)

As with the Train to Gain offer the focus will be on employees without their first Level 2 qualification or those without Basic Skills

It is important to note that unlike the regional LSC, NES does not focus on any priority sectors such as Engineering or Construction. For example, NES would
not refuse to work with a large employer based on their sector, e.g. Sainsbury’s.

**How does NES work with large employers?**
The purpose of the National Employer Service is to simplify the LSC’s relationship with large employers.

This is achieved through an Account Management system. To ensure that large national employers work with the LSC at a single point they are assigned an Account Manager on first contact. The Account Manager works closely with the large employer to build a relationship and to assess the needs of the organisation.

The Account Management process in NES consists of 3 teams:

- New Business Team who make initial contact with the employer; assess their needs and eligibility; and, help them draw up a proposal for direct NES funding
- Development Team who support the employer through the contracting process
- Contract Management Team who manage accounts and explore expansion opportunities

**What training provision does NES use?**
The employer holds a contract with the LSC and the employer can choose whether or not to sub-contract their training and or assessment to large national training providers or deliver it in-house.

In line with the Government’s skills agenda, all training is demand-led as determined by the employer.

**What do large employers want?**
Research was carried out towards the end of 2005 with the following findings as to what large employers are looking for:

- Use of innovative approaches to training methods
- Need for greater knowledge about sectors
- Need for Basic Skills training
THE NATIONAL EMPLOYER SERVICE
3. ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST
ELIGIBILITY CHECKLIST

The checklist below shows the main eligibility factors for NES that you should consider when dealing with large employers.

The points below are the main areas to be taken into consideration regarding eligibility; however it is important to remember that each employer should be considered on a case by case basis.

If you are unsure about the eligibility of a large employer that you are engaged with then please seek advice from your regional LSC Train to Gain manager.

Employers are eligible for NES Skills Brokerage if they:

- Are a large multi-site employer
- Have more than 5,000 employees
- Have centralised human resource management
- Have the potential for at least 200 learners on one programme (e.g. Apprentices) in year 1, rising to 1000 learners or 10% of the workforce by year 3
- Are a private company, franchise, a public or voluntary body (where employees are paid a wage or salary, not an unpaid volunteer)

Public Sector

In most cases those referred to as public servants, which include the NHS and police force are eligible to receive funding via NES or regional Train to Gain brokerage.

However, civil servants that work in Central Government Departments and their agencies should fund such development through their own specific training budgets.

NB: As each employer and training need is dealt with on a case by case basis the public and voluntary sectors may require training to be set up regionally, where this is more appropriate for the organisation’s needs; e.g. the police and fire service. Please also see the Referral Protocols in section 4 and Business Scenarios in section 7 for examples of this.
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4. REFERRAL PROTOCOLS
REFERRAL PROTOCOLS

This section provides an introduction to the referral protocols that are in place between regional Train to Gain Skills Brokers, NES Account Managers and regional LSCs.

NES and the regions working together

The diagram below shows how NES and LSC regional Train to Gain teams will work together.
**How it will work**

Employers meeting the NES remit (i.e. an employer with 5000 or more employees) should be referred by the broker, training provider or Train to Gain contact to the NES Train to Gain Co-ordinator ([cvh-businessenquiry@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:cvh-businessenquiry@lsc.gov.uk), 02476 825815). When the organisation is referred, please provide the NES Train to Gain Co-ordinator with the following information in order to process the enquiry:

- Broker or Regional LSC contact
- Company name
- Contact at company, their position and a contact number / email
- Site address
- Proposed training provider
- Requested number of learners
- Qualifications to be delivered

Where the NES has an existing relationship with the employer (either because they have a contract, or are in discussion about one), the NES Account Manager will approach the employer’s national HR manager to ensure they are aware of the local interest and to capitalise on it to build commitment on a larger scale. The NES Train to Gain Co-ordinator will inform the broker of the response on how they wish to proceed.

Where the NES has no existing relationship with a potentially eligible employer, the aim will be to establish one. An NES National Account Manager will contact the employer with the view to facilitating a joint initial meeting where the referrer (i.e. regional colleague or Broker) and the NES Account Manager can meet with the employer and discuss their requirements further.

The NES will record details of all enquiries against employers that meet their remit.

If the NES receives an enquiry for an employer that does not meet the NES remit, then the Train to Gain Co-ordinator will refer them back to the source of the lead. And equally if the NES receives an enquiry direct from a 'non NES' employer they will put them in contact with the appropriate regional colleague to work with them.

Alternative information is available via: [http://nes.lsc.gov.uk/](http://nes.lsc.gov.uk/). Also please see Annex F of the Train to Gain Funding Requirements Document for more detail on how to work with the NES and the protocols to facilitate that.
CASE STUDIES

This section illustrates how NES works with employers.

It may not be possible from the outset to determine whether an employer is already working with NES. Do not let this deter you from contacting them or arranging an initial visit. You may find that they are part of a group or are already working with NES. However, it may be that they are not aware of NES or that a national contract is not appropriate for them and they are looking for a regional training solution.

Identifying large employers

Brokers may be able to identify whether a business unit is part of a large national company with more than 5,000 employees through the brokerage IT systems. In some cases however, this information may not be immediately transparent and it is the Broker’s responsibility to determine the status of the ‘company’.

For example: Large hospitality companies may have many operating brands that deliberately ‘cultivate’ their small company image, e.g. Amber Taverns is part of the M & B Group.

Case Studies

McDonalds

Work with McDonalds, has focused on a number of areas:

- Investor's in People (IiP) support accreditation for franchisees involving IiP UK – IiP diagnostic tool demonstrated to McDonald’s staff which they are currently considering as a tool for franchisees
- Mapping NVQs to crew member competencies with awarding body involvement - City & Guilds are now involved with this
- Innovative on-line diagnostic testing leading to Skills for Life referrals to an approved supplier network. The site may also include Further Education guidance options
- Blended learning on-line – Skills for Life programme being developed for crew members
- Support for management training
- Direct contracting for a growing number of Apprenticeships within the organisation which is currently supported through a provider

This activity is reviewed at Board level and involves a range of partners including IiP UK, Department for Education and Skills, Department for Trade and Industry and City & Guilds.

The McDonalds project shows how NES recommends different learning solutions to be used in different circumstances to best meet the employer and employees needs. Currently 1800 staff are progressing through their Individual Learning Plans.
Serco

Serco is the largest employer in England with around 50,000 employees across a diverse range of sectors.

An international service company, Serco combines commercial know-how with a deep public service ethos. It improves services by managing people, processes, technology and assets more effectively. Serco advises policy makers, design innovative solutions, integrate systems and - most of all - deliver to the public.

The Serco group has a complex business structure with autonomous divisions; each having devolved responsibilities and accountabilities. It offers operational, management and consulting expertise in the following sectors:

- Aerospace
- Defence
- Education
- Health
- Home affairs
- Local government
- Science
- Technology
- Transport
- Commercial

NES has managed a Serco contract through Serco Home Affairs for a period of time. This is now being used as the starting point for a wider dialogue across the group. This extensive dialogue with Serco has centred on the move to a holistic approach to staff development.

In essence, NES is identifying the overall training & development need within Serco with support through LSC funding so that NES can procure maximum benefits for all concerned.

Respective HR Directors throughout the group are now involved in the research project identifying individual business needs and the purchasing/procurement methodologies necessary to put the correct training and development infrastructure in place across the group. This will result in a report that will be presented to the Serco Group board in order to endorse an overall joint Serco/LSC investment strategy.

This Serco case study highlights the more strategic level of work that NES takes part in to strengthen the link between employer needs and new skills development.
Network Rail

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight LSC contract with Network Rail is now well into its first year with 220 Engineering Apprentices working through their programme at HMS Sultan in Gosport – a 179 Acre dedicated Engineering facility.

This will be taken forward as a direct national contract with the LSC signing up 250 Apprentices. It is envisaged that NES will work closely with local LSC colleagues to jointly manage this programme with Flagship (the training provider) and Network Rail.

The training programme is receiving high profile coverage both internally and externally. In particular, it has featured extensively in the industry newspaper – Railstaff. Network Rail is now keen to discuss wider HR development issues as it has invested heavily in management training facilities and is keen to explore ways in which it can work with NES to broaden the current partnership.

The project with Network Rail shows how an effective relationship can lead to long term commitment and investment from a large employer to focus on the training and development of their staff.

Sainsbury’s

NES has been working with Sainsbury’s training department to reduce the burden on employers when contracting learning solutions. Currently there are various records which employers are expected to keep once they have a contract for Apprenticeships and/or other programmes.

Steven Davis, Sainsbury’s Training Manager has said that, “The work carried out has resulted in a reduction of 75% of time with less paperwork being required.”

NES are continuing to work with Sainsbury’s to identify both English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Skills for Life training needs within their London stores. Apprenticeships, Level 2 literacy and numeracy programmes are also being taken forward. Similar assessments will then be made in other regions and further training and development strategies will be discussed.
THE NATIONAL EMPLOYER SERVICE
6. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

The questions below should help to answer some of the more frequently asked questions about NES in relation to Train to Gain.

Q1: Does NES fund the same levels of Numeracy and Literacy as Train to Gain?
A: The LSC will fund Numeracy and Literacy skills for life up to level 2. Please refer to the Basic Skills module for more information.

Q2: What happens if a large employer would like to put a large number of young people (16-24) through training in an area that does not have an Apprenticeship framework or simply prefers them to do a stand alone NVQ?
A: NES would encourage the employer and young people to undertake an Apprenticeship programme if at all possible, particularly if aged between 16 – 18 years of age.

If there is not a relevant Apprenticeship framework available NES would like to assist the employer in conjunction with working with the Sector Skills Council to provide a flexible programme for employees.

Q3: Can large employers decide they wish to work with regional Skills Brokers?
A: Yes, this option is available to large employers.

As each employer is dealt with on a case by case basis and flexibility is key, large employers do have the choice to work with either NES or regional Skills Brokers. It may be that the employer does not have the potential to set up training for 200 learners or only wishes to set up training programmes in one or two sites.

If large employers are receiving regional provision NES would like to be made aware in line with the Referral Protocol.

This communication is key as the regional Broker may at a future point identify the potential for wider engagement. If this is the case, NES can liaise with the regional Broker to discuss national opportunities.

Even if NES is contracting with a large employer, this may be within a separate division and may not be widely known within the organisation. The employer needs to be made aware of both the NES and regional Train to Gain services in order to select the best one to suit their needs.

Q4: Are all large employers expected to pay a contribution towards the cost of training or are there those that receive fully funded courses?
A: NES fund eligible programmes for eligible employees, although there is an expectation that employers will use this funding as a contribution towards their wider strategic workforce development plan to fund all staff, both eligible and ineligible, and allow time off for study. It is the employers choice as to how they use this funding as long as they deliver their contracted learners and can demonstrate the added value of training delivered.

Q5: Where a large multi-sited employer is setting up training at two sites and is working with two regional brokerage teams what protocols should be followed?

A: In this case, if training occurs across more than one region, it is for one of the regions to ‘lead’ on behalf of the other region. The ‘lead’ region would be either where the company head office is based or where the majority of provision occurs.

Co-ordination across the LSC regions would be necessary to agree the approach and funding levels attached to such Train to Gain activity.

It is important to remember that a new Organisational Needs Analysis (ONA) will be needed for each region as their training needs may differ.

Q6: Who can I contact for more information?

A: NES national account managers for each region:

East of England: Colin Biddulph
East Midlands: Brett Hanson
London: Ben Hansford
North West: Mary Evans
North East: Robert Seeney
South East: Trina Mumby
South West: Anna Wood
Yorkshire and Humber: Helen Cantwell
West Midlands: Bhavena Patel

A: And the NES Train to Gain Coordinator (cvh-businessenquiry@lsc.gov.uk, 02476 825815). Any queries regarding the protocol, for example over whether an employer should be referred to the NES, or for further information on the NES’ offer please do not hesitate to contact the Train to Gain Coordinator who will be able to assist you further.
THE NATIONAL EMPLOYER SERVICE
7. BUSINESS SCENARIOS
BUSINESS SCENARIOS

This section details some real life scenarios of businesses which have been working either with NES or at a regional level.

Looking at each scenario and considering the questions below will help to apply the information from the NES resource pack.

The following examples demonstrate that it is not always obvious whether an employer is eligible for NES services and funding, and that it is not always appropriate for them to roll out national programmes.

Activity
Please analyse the businesses listed below based on the information you have received in the NES resource pack in relation to eligibility criteria and referrals.

When reading the employer profiles consider:

1. Is the employer eligible to receive funding from the LSC?
2. Your thoughts as to whether this is a NES referral or a regional lead?
3. Your next steps (i.e. visit the company, contact NES etc)
United Engineering
Private sector, provider of power systems and services for use on land, at sea and in the air, operates in four global markets - civil aerospace, defence aerospace, marine and energy.

The head office is in the East Midlands and the company has close links with the local LSC network. It has a broad customer base including airlines and the armed forces. United Engineering employs 21,000 people across the UK alone.

The company would like to set up Apprenticeship programmes in a range of engineering disciplines.

Response/approach
The company is eligible for NES funding.

Although it is clearly a large employer the company currently engages with the LSC/Brokers at a regional level because it has had a long standing relationship with stakeholders and partners in the region for a number of years.

Programmes have been set up in Engineering, Supervision, Leadership and Management qualifications, and bespoke courses.

In this type of scenario it would be advisable to visit the employer and see if it wants to work regionally or have a national brokerage service from NES.
Shamrock
Private sector, contract catering company which supplies facilities management, food services and service voucher operations for 2,300 clients across a wide range of market sectors in the UK, Ireland and worldwide.

Shamrock employs 48,000 people in the UK and Ireland. It would like to set up training at its sites in the Midlands and the South East to supply a range of NVQ and Apprenticeship training in Hospitality, Catering, Cleaning and Support services and also address training needs in terms of Basic Skills.

The company already holds a NES contract across two of its divisions for Apprenticeships. Most of the older catering staff have experience, but do not necessarily hold qualifications.

Response/approach
They are eligible for NES funding.

Leadership and Management and NVQ training has been set up through a national contract which delivers to only 2 divisions of the company but there is also scope to work on a regional level. In some cases certain divisions of a large company will work in conjunction to roll out training but this may not apply to all the divisions.
**Nectar Taverns**
Public houses and restaurants located throughout England. Nectar employs 6000 staff who work in a wide range of roles across the hospitality industry.

The company would like to roll out an Apprenticeship training programme in all areas of hospitality from a management level down.

An enquiry has come from one of the local outlets who have heard about Train to Gain through media advertising. It has a number of staff over 18 who need to be trained in Food Hygiene and Health & Safety.

**Response/approach**
Nectar Taverns is eligible for NES funding.

Training has been set up for Apprenticeships and NVQs in a range of hospitality roles. In this case the best way to proceed is for the Broker to investigate where the head office is; it is unclear whether it is a cross regional referral.

It would be advisable to undertake an initial telephone conversation with the manager of the local tavern and possibly contact head office to see if there is a need for other regional Brokers to work with them.

The Broker should also ascertain whether they have a NES contract already and if so how they would like to proceed. Depending on the employer response then there may be a need to have liaison with NES brokerage and the regional brokerage service.
The Fire Brigade
Public sector, emergency fire and rescue service. It has a regional set up and hence no centralised HR system.

The Fire Brigade employs staff in a wide range of roles; uniformed (firefighters) and non-uniformed. The latter includes roles in areas such as community fire safety, emergency planning, technical services, finance, HR and administration.

The Fire Brigade is interested in setting up training for their administrative staff and technicians.

Response/approach
It is not part of central government or an agency.

However, although one may expect to engage with the Fire Service at a national level using NES, each fire brigade has a local set up and there is no centralised HR or national training and development programme. It would therefore be inappropriate for them to work with NES. They are therefore working on a regional level to implement new support staff qualifications, rolling out training in administration and technical support programmes.

Although this would initially be a regional lead, the Broker should also assist the employer in directing them to other regional brokerage services across the country where appropriate.