A new campaign - *Our future. It's in our hands* - urging people to take control of their future by investing in skills, will be launched today by Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), John Denham and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) Chairman, Chris Banks at an event attended by over 150 further education and skills stakeholders at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) in London.

It is the most ambitious marketing and communications campaign of its kind, driven by the LSC and DIUS, and over a three to five year period aims to bring about the cultural change needed to improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.

Research shows that over half of adults in England (53 per cent) believe they could achieve more out of life, and of these, almost two thirds (60 per cent) think improving their skills through training and education is the best way to do so.¹

With more than half the country convinced that change is possible, the new Skills Campaign - *Our future. It's in our hands* - calls on both individuals and employers to take control of their future with better skills.

“The big message today is, don’t get left behind,” says Chris Banks, Chairman of the LSC. “We want it to be as easy as possible for people to access information and understand what help is available for them to get the skills needed to get on in life and business. This
new campaign brings all the LSC’s existing activities under the banner of *Our future. It’s in our hands.* There’s never been a better time for people to grab the training opportunities on offer with both hands and take control.”

The advertising campaign - *Our future. It’s in our hands* – will appear across a wide range of national and regional television channels as well as across print, radio, outdoor and online media from 9 July. A dedicated phone line 0800 011 30 30 and website lsc.gov.uk/inourhands will ensure that people have easy access to relevant information about how to get better skills through different training opportunities available for young people, adults and employers.

*Our Future. It’s in our hands* forms part of the broader Leitch Implementation Plan “World Class Skills: Implementing the Leitch Review of Skills in England” which will be unveiled later in July. The campaign is supported by hundreds of colleges and training providers as well as employer and education associations.

Published in December 2006, the Leitch Review warned that the UK must become a world leader in skills by 2020 if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy. Achieving this ambition means dramatically increasing the number of adults who improve their skills and achieve qualifications each year, at all levels from functional literacy and numeracy to higher education levels.

It is driven by stark statistics which indicate that the number of jobs in low-skilled occupations will continue to fall rapidly. In 2004 figures showed that there were 6.8 million adults in the UK without a Level 2 qualification and with serious skills needs in numeracy, literacy and IT.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Peter Hain said: “For the UK to compete in a global economy it is critical we equip everyone, especially the lowest skilled and unemployed, with the skills they need to get a job and progress in work. Employers are
trying to fill 600,000 vacancies across the country and Government is committed to ensuring people with low skills have the chance to get the right training, whether in or out of work, to make the most of these opportunities. I welcome the new Skills Campaign as a valuable tool to help us achieve this ambition.”

Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham said: “This exciting new campaign is not just about improving skill levels, but creating a cultural change in the nation’s attitude to skills.

“The Government has accepted the ambitious challenge to become a world leader in skills, and we are committed to achieving this. We have already launched the new Skills Pledge to employers and employees and this campaign will help build on that.

“The campaign encourages employers and individuals to invest more in learning and skills. Through a combined commitment and effort, everyone will benefit – individuals, businesses and ultimately the nation’s economy.”

Significant progress has already been made in the skills arena over the past five years. The LSC has instigated a wide range of programmes to help employers and learners with their skills needs, including Train to Gain, the National Skills Academy network, Adult Learning Grants, Education Maintenance Allowance and Apprenticeships.

Speaking at the launch, Shaun Anderson, who has gained an advanced electro technical Apprenticeship and who reached the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards finals, said:

“Initially I thought that all my efforts had gone to waste but I have managed to overcome my earlier failings, and have set myself new targets for the future. My training has provided me with so many opportunities and I hope that this new exciting campaign will encourage others to do the same”
Individuals and employers can access the information they need via a dedicated phone line and website. The phone number is 0800 011 30 30 or website: lsc.gov.uk/inourhands

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

Learning and Skills Council (LSC):

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England’s young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Supporting quotes for use in the media:

Linsey Miller, HR Advisor at Leisure Connection, is aware of the benefits of training employees of all levels: “We have really noticed the link between training, the quality of our services and staff retention and can see how our business and staff benefit from training programmes. This is why we back the launch of the skills campaign, we see that it will help people realise the importance of skills and encourage them to take action.”

Nigel Moore, City & Guilds, explains: “We welcome this innovative campaign that will do much to raise awareness of the value of skills for individuals and employers.”
Steve Pallas, Training and Development Manager at Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK, is keen to emphasise the advantages of training: “The business benefits of training are clear and, at Nissan, we see a direct correlation between training and improvements in productivity. If we measure key performance indicators before and after training, we always see an improvement. Gaining new skills at work also helps improve employees' attitudes and commitment.”

Ian Hetherington, Skills for Logistics: “A better-skilled workforce is good for all of us”.

John Brennan, Association of Colleges, sees that “Skills are crucially important to the future prosperity of us all – as individuals, employers, and the nation. Colleges make a vital contribution in equipping us to improve our capabilities. AoC and its member colleges are delighted to support a campaign that seeks to inspire individuals and employers to take control of their own futures.”

Catherine Dymond, Ufi, states: “The more we can work together, the more choice and support we can give learners.”

Jacqui Henderson, CBE, UK Skills, “We support the skills campaign because we believe that everyone benefits when a country has high level skills and a commitment to learning and development. Skills are the key to us being successful as individuals and as a nation. I look forward to seeing our commitment to skills being successfully demonstrated to the world when London hosts the WorldSkills competition in 2011.”

For further media information contact:

Learning and Skills Council
Shavaun Glen, LSC 07766 441 866
Suzanne Ashe, LSC 07880 722 915
Ann Gill, LSC 07776 464 369
Hill & Knowlton
Helen Castro, Hill & Knowlton 020 7973 4427
helen.castro@hillandknowlton.com
Alexandra Davies, Hill & Knowlton 020 7413 3767
alexandra.davies@hillandknowlton.com

Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
Press office Philip Treloar 020 7215 3052

1 ICM Poll commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) July 2007
2 DfES, September 2004