In line with their Skills Pledge, made in June 2007, Sainsbury’s has now offered its entire workforce (150,000 colleagues) the opportunity to gain nationally recognised qualifications and brush up on English and Maths.

The retailer has set a target for 25% of all colleagues to have a nationally recognised qualification within the next five years. Sainsbury’s Chief Executive, Justin King launched the new You Can initiative, on Wednesday 5th November.

The National Employer Service has been working closely with Sainsbury’s for more than two years to support their workforce development programmes. This has included the introduction of a new paperless system for learner records that has drastically reduced the company’s burden of paperwork.

“What’s impressive is the scale - it shows what can be achieved when an employer puts workforce development at the heart of its business.”

Hilary Chadwick, Director of NES
DHL delivers skills

DHL Express became the biggest logistics company to make the Skills Pledge at an event attended by the Skills Minister, Lord Young on the 24th November.

The company intends to offer recognised development opportunities to staff at operational and supervisory levels through NVQs and Apprenticeships. DHL Express plans to deliver these qualifications to more than 1,700 staff in various divisions of the business over the next three years.

The National Employer Service has been working closely with DHL Express for the past 9 months to support the development of this training programme. We are continuing to work to support the company in rolling out the programme to the 75,000 employees of the wider DHL Group, through a direct funding contract.

Beadle goes bananas for NES

On Monday 20th October representatives from more than 50 large, national employers gathered to consider the barriers that prevent business from scaling up workforce development and how NES employers can continue to work together to reduce bureaucracy and make the system work better for business.

During the day employers were brought up to date with the many changes taking place and asked to take responsibility for maintaining the pace of change in the system. A high note in the day came when Phil Beadle, the keynote speaker who featured in Can’t read Can’t Write, a recent Channel 4 series which examined the realities of adult literacy in today’s Britain, outlined how he had succeeded where others had failed and how to inspire change.

Afternoon workshops looked in more depth at specific changes taking place including the integration of employment and skills, the new electronic platform for learner administration, the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the new apprenticeships Vacancy Matching System.

Feedback from the day was excellent with many positive comments.

“I felt Informed and inspired to play a more active role in shaping the rapidly evolving skills system.” NES Employer

Bupa STARS at National Training Awards

Bupa recently scooped a coveted prize at the 2008 National Training Awards. STARS, its training and development programme for carers, was recognised for its radical and innovative departure from traditional NVQs.

Bupa joined forces with NVQUK to develop STARS (which stands for Systematic Training, Achievement, Retention and Success) which is funded by the National Employer Service.

“We believe that our partnership with NVQUK and NES has enabled us to offer our carers the best training programme anywhere in the care sector – STARS has broken the mould for NVQ, Apprenticeship and Skills for Life training.”

James Clegg, Head of People Development at Bupa
NES responds to economic downturn

If a large national employer informs us of impending redundancies, Jobcentre Plus’s (JCP) National Sales Team (NST) and the LSC’s National Employer Service (NES) may be the first to hear, if there is already a relationship with the employer at national level.

NES and NST have established a joint National Employment and Skills project team to identify such issues at national level and to deliver a joined up service to national employers. The service is one of rapid response for employers working across many regions, to find them help either to recruit and upskill staff or to secure retraining and outplacement services for those who they are letting go. This help will then be available through the local or regional LSCs or JCP offices.

National Employment and Skills Partnership update

This work on redundancies fits well with the joined-up account management service for large employers which NES is developing with the Jobcentre Plus National Sales Team (NST).

This service enables large employers to negotiate once, at national level, their corporate framework, which could then be customised within Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs). Our working title for this work is National Employment Partnerships.

Trailblazer pilot programmes include G4S, Reliance, Superdrug, Bupa and Sainsbury’s. Other companies including Wincanton, Whitbread, Allied Healthcare, McDonald’s, Royal Mail, Voyage, Barchester, and Rentokil have already expressed interest in being involved.

NES Summit: National Employers, National Solutions

The next National Employer Service event will be a high level summit in partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families for Chief Executives and Government at One Whitehall, London on 29th January.

Keynote speakers will be Justin King, Chief Executive, Sainsbury’s and Ed Balls MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families.

The event will look at what large employers can do to support young people in the context of the 14-19 educational reforms, and how government can simplify the system for employers.