31 October 2007: Skills Minister, David Lammy MP will today announce four major additions to the 400 companies that have made the Skills Pledge since it was launched by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in June. Today’s announcement will have an impact on more than 45,000 employees in England who work for Interserve Plc, VT Group Plc, EDS UK and Reliance Security Group Ltd and will be made at the National Employer Service’s Conference in Central London this afternoon. More than 2.5 million employees have been covered by the Skills Pledge since June.

Interserve Plc, VT Group Plc, EDS UK and Reliance Security Group Ltd will make a public and voluntary commitment to support all their employees to develop themselves and work towards a relevant, valuable qualification to at least at Level 2 - the equivalent of five GCSEs at A - C grade, including basic skills such as numeracy and literacy.

Part of the Learning and Skills Council, the National Employer Service supports large, multi-site employers to deliver a range of work-based learning programmes in-house, including Apprenticeships, NVQs and basic skills training. Employers that make a commitment to the Skills Pledge have support from Skills Brokers, as part of the Learning and Skills Council’s Train to Gain service, to help them draw up their plans, and if appropriate to find good training providers and access free literacy and numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses.

Skills Minister David Lammy, MP, Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, said:

“In today’s global economy having a highly skilled workforce is an economic necessity, not an optional extra. To achieve our ambition for world class skills we are giving employers a powerful voice in designing the training they require, and delivering it where and when they want it to meet their needs.
"With this truly 'demand-led' skills strategy in place we are now in a position to make a hugely significant call to action to employers, large and small, to make a public commitment to training all their staff through the ‘Skills Pledge’.

“Employers committing to the Skills Pledge today and undertaking to train all their staff are showing the type of excellence we are looking to be the norm across the country.”

The Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006, warned that the UK must ‘raise its game’ on skills at all levels if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy. The Skills Pledge fulfils a key recommendation made in the review, at the heart of a new ‘deal’ where employers will be able to shape the skills system to meet their needs, in return for prioritising skills training at all levels.

Hilary Chadwick, Director, National Employer Service, LSC, said:
“I want to congratulate the employers that are making the Skills Pledge today for their commitment to developing their staff and their business. I am delighted that another 45,000 employees across England will have the support to improve their skills levels.”

Steve Beesley, UK Operations Director, EDS, said:
“We view making the Skills Pledge an integral part of our commitment to the ongoing development of our staff as well as our business. We recognise the importance and impact of training - it improves the ability, confidence and retention of our staff, and ultimately brings about long-term business benefits, including increased productivity.”

For more information on the Skills Pledge, please visit traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge
or call 0800 015 55 45

- ENDS –

Learning and Skills Council:
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.
EDS
EDS is a leading global technology services company delivering business solutions to its clients. EDS founded the information technology outsourcing industry more than 40 years ago. Today, EDS delivers a broad portfolio of information technology and business process outsourcing services to clients in the manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, communications, energy, transportation, and consumer and retail industries and to governments around the world. Learn more at eds.com.

Reliance Security Group Plc
Established over 30 years ago, Reliance Security Group Ltd is an established market leader in the provision of security solutions, facilities management and business process outsourcing. It employs over 14,000 people throughout a network of offices throughout the UK and recorded a £346 million turnover for 2006-2007. Further information about the Group can be found at www.reliancesecurity.co.uk

VT Group
VT Group is a major defence and support services company which aims to become the number one international government services group. Customers also include government agencies and businesses worldwide. VT Group employs over 13,000 people and has its Headquarters in Southampton, UK. It comprises five divisions, with its support businesses operating from various locations primarily in the UK, USA and Middle East, and shipbuilding operating principally from new facilities in Portsmouth, UK. Further information about VT Group, its services and products can be found at www.vtplc.com.

Interserve
Interserve Plc is a services, maintenance and building group. It creates buildings and other structures for clients in the public and private sectors, maintains many different types of buildings, the operational systems that support them and a range of plant and equipment in specialist fields, and co-ordinates a host of background services to keep its clients’ operations running smoothly and efficiently while they concentrate on their core business. Interserve is based in the UK and is a FTSE 250 Company. It employs 26,000 people worldwide and has revenue of £1.4 billion.

Notes to editors:
Interviews and imagery are available on request.

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