England set for a more active future with the launch of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure

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The creation of a legacy for The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has moved a step closer with the launch of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure. Playing a key role in getting 50% of the UK population active and healthy by 2020, the skills academy aims to improve the performance of the UK leisure sector by training 85,000 people per year.

The skills academy is being officially opened by Lord Young, Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships and Gerry Sutcliffe, Minister for Sport, at Lord’s Cricket Ground in London. It is one of a network of 16 national skills academies covering a wide range of industry sectors.

The National Skills Academy network is led by employers for employers to give businesses the specialist skills they need to prosper. It is a new approach that puts employers in the driving seat to shape training for their industry and it exists to ensure that work-based training is geared towards businesses success. Each skills academy has developed a unique model that helps employers select the best training to maximise returns from the learning process and increase the speed at which positive results are achieved.

Speaking today, Lord Young said: "I am delighted that employers in the sport and active leisure sector have seized upon the National Skills Academy initiative. The employers investing in this partnership will reap the dividends of high quality tailored training and safeguard future growth in their industry. Today’s launch is great news for the future of the nation’s health and will work to directly deliver skilled workers for London 2012 and beyond."

The vision of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure is to deliver a single coherent approach to the very best skills training in the sector which will solve the acute demand for better skills. Currently a fifth of the sector’s 36,500 organisations report skills gaps, 79% of the industry lack good customer service skills and 64% of industry managers need better management and leadership skills. There is also a real need for new employees to join the sector to drive up standards in the industry and ensure there are enough skilled volunteers in place for the 2012 Olympic Games.

The skills academy will have a strong physical presence throughout the country – with nine regional hubs operational by 2010 and a national office. It will also make training accessible for all through a strong focus on online learning and the first 120 learners have already begun their training. Understanding the needs of individual industries and adjusting the learning provision to meet those needs is crucial for the successful delivery of each National Skills Academy – the initial 120 learners in the sport and active leisure sector were recruited through an innovative and effective text messaging campaign.

Martin Havenhand, Chair of the National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure, said:
“We are in an exciting and challenging era for the British sports and active leisure industry. I am delighted to be involved in this pioneering partnership between big name employers of the industry and Government that is addressing our skills needs. The employer led National Skills Academy for Sport and Active Leisure will respond with a better skilled workforce - equipped for successfully meeting business needs.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The National Skills Academy network

National Skills Academies lead the way in the development of industry specific training the really delivers against business objectives. Each National Skills Academy puts employers at the heart of skills training for their sector: they influence the curriculum to ensure it reflects employers’ needs; get involved in the skills academy’s management; set standards; and influence strategic direction.

The National Skills Academy network was initiated by the Government to address the need for a world class workforce with better skills than ever before. It is managed by the Learning and Skills Council working in partnership with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, the Skills for Business Network and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

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