The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) today pledged its commitment to continuing to support its employee’s skills development. The LSC joined 150 private and public organisations who have pledged to support the Government in increasing the nation’s skills levels. This follows on from recommendations made by Lord Leitch in his report on skills which found that England lagged behind its economic competitors in terms of education and training.

The Skills Pledge was launched at an event in London attended by Chancellor Gordon Brown, Education Secretary Alan Johnson and the UK Skills Envoy Sir Digby Jones.

Through the Skills Pledge, employers will commit to continuing to support their employees and new recruits to improve their skills and become better qualified. As a minimum, that means supporting all employees to work towards achieving their first full Level 2 qualification (equivalent to five good GCSEs).

The LSC’s Train to Gain programme will play a key role in this, providing employers with a free and impartial brokerage system to identify their skills needs and identify routes for them to access work based training. Train to Gain will also pay for any employees first full Level 2 and will subsidise employers who want to invest in providing their employees with higher level skills or multiple qualifications.

The LSC’s Chairman Chris Banks signed the LSC’s pledge at the event saying:

“The LSC is leading the way in the FE sector by being one of the first organisations to commit to the Pledge.
“For an organisation like the LSC, where most staff already have a Level 2, the pledge is all about higher level skills and helping staff to progress to fulfil their potential and deliver our business objectives. We will also be exploring with our suppliers how we might help them also sign up to the Pledge.

“It is really important that employers get on board and start investing in the training and development of their staff. The LSC’s Train to Gain programme will provide employers with that vital bridge between identifying their skills gaps and providing them with a cost effective solution”.

“Already 40,000 employers have signed up to Train to Gain and we hope that this Pledge will encourage more to follow suit. Improving your staff’s skills levels could make a real difference to a businesses ‘bottom line’ whilst also increasing motivation”.

Sir Digby Jones, the UK’s Skills Envoy said:

“With seven million adults who are functionally illiterate and 11 million who cannot add up two three-figure numbers, the social and economic cost of an unskilled adult population is fundamentally damaging to Britain’s chance of winning in the 21st Century”.

The Chancellor announced the appointment of Sir Michael Rake as Chair of a new Commission for Employment and Skills; a major recommendation put forward by Leitch was to enhance the voice of employers at the heart of the employment and skills agenda. The Commission will be advising Government on its strategies, targets and policies to increase employment and skills rates as well as assessing progress toward targets.

Education Secretary Alan Johnson also announced the selection of four further National Skills Academies in retail, sport and active leisure, glass manufacturing, coatings, print and building products; and fashion textiles and the jewellery sector. The LSC are funding and managing the development of twelve new National Skills Academies this year.

Alan Johnson said:
“National Skills Academies are another key feature of our commitment to raising productivity and giving employers a real stake in skills training. They offer employers, in return for their investment, and the opportunity to exercise direct influence over both content and delivery of skills training in their sector. I would like to be the first to congratulate the latest four successful applicants.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

This press notice relates to England only

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.

- 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.
- The Pledge can be given by the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, or board member on behalf of the 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.
- The Skills Pledge is open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors.
- More than 150 employers, including all central Government Departments, McDonalds, Sainsbury’s and the Police, have made the Skills Pledge, meaning more than 1.7 million employees will be covered by the Pledge.
- LSC Chairman Chris Banks signed the Skills Pledge for the LSC and for his company Big Thoughts.
- Published in December 2006, Lord Leitch’s independent review of skills 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 and get on track to achieve world class skills by 2020.
- The new Commission for Employment and Skills was a recommendation of the independent report by Lord Leitch commissioned by the Chancellor ‘Prosperity for all in the
global economy – world class skills’ and published in December 2006. Establishing the UK Commission for Employment and Skills offers employers a massive opportunity to drive and shape the skills and employment systems to meet their needs. Through the Commission, employers will be able to influence the delivery of skills and employment services at all levels, in all sectors, and across the whole of the UK.

- The newly appointed Chair Sir Michael Rake will lead the establishment of the Commission (expected to become operational in April 2008). The new Commission will be established during 2007 and will replace two existing bodies - the Sector Skills Development Agency and the National Employment Panel.
- Currently International Chairman of KPMG, Sir Michael Rake is the only non-American Chairman of a major international accounting organization. He will shortly be taking up post as Chair of BT. Sir Michael was a member of the CBI’s President’s Committee from 2001 to 2006, and is a member of the CBI International Advisory Committee. He is a member of the International Business Council of the World Economic Forum. He is Chair of Business in the Community, and is on the Board of the Prince of Wales’ International Business Leaders Forum. He is a Vice-President of the Royal National Institute for the Blind, and is on the Advisory Board of the Judge Institute at the University of Cambridge.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To register your interest in making the Skills Pledge you can call 0800 015 5545 or register your details on www.train2gain.gov.uk

LSC Website: www.lsc.gov.uk

All public enquiries please contact:

LSC Helpdesk: 0870 900 6800

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