

Business Briefing

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EAST MIDLANDS

Apprenticeships benefit business Leading the way to a brighter future



A Rolls-Royce plc apprentice at work

Employers need talented, skilled and dedicated people to tackle skills shortages and help their businesses grow – and apprenticeships tick all the boxes, says LSC East Midlands new regional director, Tom Crompton.

"Thousands of companies are already reaping the benefits of Apprenticeship programmes," he points out. "Our task now is to help even more employers 'switch on' to the hugely beneficial impact that employing apprentices can have on their overall business performance. This is absolutely essential to the economy of the region and the UK in general.

"On the one hand, Apprenticeships give staff a sense of commitment, good qualifications and a real boost in confidence. On the other they lead to increased staff retention and the opportunities for employers to harvest new talent."

Tom continues: "There's good advice and guidance available to help employers get started with Apprenticeships, and I urge them to take advantage of this excellent route to higher productivity. We work closely with a range of providers and partners who can signpost employers to valuable training subsidies."

The Government, which is fully committed to the National Apprenticeship Service currently led by the LSC, wants to see one in five young adults doing Apprenticeships by 2020. Already, 83 per cent of employers in the UK rely on their Apprenticeship programmes whose quality and relevant training help them to provide the skilled workers they need for the future.

Qualifications

Even better, Apprenticeships are for all ages, not just for 16-18 year olds. Advanced Apprenticeships cater for even higher levels of qualifications.

"Other opportunities include the Competence to Excellence programme which aims to raise the status of work-based learning and Apprenticeships nationally through a series of expert classes," Tom adds. "These drive forward the Government's skills agenda and inspire young people to raise their skills to the highest levels."

Apprenticeships helping to beat skills shortages

Proof of the "real benefits" that Apprenticeships bring to both employers and individuals was evident from the high calibre of entrants for the Regional Apprenticeship Awards, LSC East Midlands director of skills, Karen Woodward, said.

"The Awards have highlighted some outstanding contributions from employers and their apprentices in raising skills in the region," she commented. "Their efforts are improving productivity and competitiveness and helping to combat skills shortages."

• **More about the award winners on Pages 2, 3 and 8.**

To find out more about Apprenticeships, you can visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk or call the Apprenticeships employer helpline on 08000 150 400.

Coming soon... a cutting edge web-based Vacancy Matching Service to match prospective apprentices with employers in the relevant industry. Due to be launched in the autumn, this on-line service will include support from a hotline to help users choose the best route for them.

**Our future.
It's in our hands.**

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Roger Begy

Skills add value, says new regional chair

Developing the skills of their workforce is one of the most important challenges facing businesses over the next five years, maintains Roger Begy, the chair of the LSC East Midlands Regional Council.

Roger is passionate about helping to shape a world-class education and skills system for the East Midlands. A businessman himself, he has a keen understanding of the increasing demands placed on companies in a competitive market.

"It's very clear that in my particular area – the food industry – it is difficult if not impossible to be merely the lowest cost producer," he said. "It's therefore necessary to add value, and with that comes skills. If we do not get these skills and upskill our labour force, and add value to our products, the business will disappear to lower cost countries."

There was now a major opportunity to take advantage of the £1 billion national investment in Train to Gain in the next few years, and to help develop Apprenticeships, he said. It was also important for workforces – and employees of all ages – to appreciate and recognise the need for skills.

In meeting the demands for skills, training must be flexible, he pointed out. "Many of our training providers have done a brilliant job in responding to that challenge."

A Board Member of the East Midlands Regional Assembly and East Midlands Tourism, Roger is the former chair of LSC Lincolnshire and Rutland. Taking up his role as chair of the Regional Council, he paid tribute to all those who have served as chairs and members of local councils, and especially John Kirkland OBE who also served as chair of the Regional Board. "They have made a significant contribution," he said.

Roger, who received the OBE for services to further education this year, has also been leading the process for recruiting members to the new Regional Council which is to be formally established in September. Nine new Regional Councils are replacing the previous 47 Local Councils, resulting in a more simplified, less bureaucratic structure.

Roger has held many senior positions during his career including managing director of Alcan Polyfoil, running the sweet corn interests of Green Giant in the UK and Europe, and sales and marketing director of British Sugar. He is currently involved in a start up company that has developed a half-calorie sugar.

APPRENTICESHIPS TAKE THE STAGE

More than 300 finalists and guests from across the region attended the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham in May to see apprentice and employer finalists accept their Regional Apprenticeship Awards and commendations.

LSC regional director Tom Crompton told them: "Everyone who has taken part – our learners, training providers and employers – should all be very proud of their achievements."

Referring to the Government's aim for Apprenticeships to play a central role in its plans for growing skills in the economy, he said: "The economy depends upon skilled individuals across the whole spectrum of vocational learning and it is important that we recognise the high achievements in these fields."

Playing host at this memorable evening of congratulations and triumph was Maggie Philbin, BBC radio presenter and former presenter of the BBC's Tomorrow's World. The ceremony was sponsored by EM Plus and award sponsors LANTERN, Rolls Royce, TNG, Training Services 2000 and Train to Gain.

Subsequently, four of our regional finalists went forward to the national Apprenticeship Awards in July when Kingscliffe Day Nursery of Loughborough was named micro-employer of the year. Our other regional finalists were Advanced Apprentice Gemma Barrett and Apprentice David Khan, both of Nottinghamshire, and Forum Computers of Lincoln.



MES National's business operations manager Terry Hawley and apprentice Liam Swinney

High Voltage of Success for Electrical Company

Mansfield Electrical Services (MES National) have integrated Apprenticeship programmes into the company since it was set up in 1984. Each and every apprentice has "paid off tenfold," the company says.

Today, MES National is an internationally recognised company employing over 86 staff, 30 of whom are apprentices. Operations director Terry Hawley comments: "Apprenticeships enable us to train and mould learners so they are familiar with our company culture and procedures, whilst equipping them with the skills and abilities necessary to succeed in the industry."

He continues: "Apprentices secure the lifeline of the company. By investing in the Apprenticeship programmes we've created a cost effective way to maximise productivity."

Many of the company's apprentices have progressed internally within the company – like Nick Walton, 34, who is now a contracts manager. Nick maintains that Apprenticeships are "a good way to learn a trade as you're able to gain real, hands on experience."

MES National work with Empower Training to train their apprentices. Peter Gill, training officer, comments: "We work collaboratively to devise workable and sustainable solutions for the apprentices' individual needs." And Terry points out: "When it comes to the recruitment of our apprentices, Empower do all the legwork from sourcing them and arranging interviews right through to mentoring them throughout their qualifications."

Congratulations to all our Regional Employer Apprenticeship Award winners. Here, three winners offer a taste of their experiences.



BGB Engineering's Bill Hemmingway, right, and Young Apprentice of the Year Luke Kemp.

Apprenticeships provide strong foundation to company

Sponsor: East Midlands Business Ltd.

Medium Employer of the Year Award (50-249 employees): BGB Engineering in Grantham, Lincolnshire.

Commitment to developing the skills of its staff is a top priority for BGB Engineering which employs 72 people, including five apprentices.

Bill Hemmingway, the firm's quality and environmental manager, has found that Apprenticeships provide the strong foundation needed to build continued professional development.

The firm's apprentices' hands-on training is aided by Yes Training – Grantham College. Rob Nixon, work based learning manager at the college, said: "BGB Engineering has been working in close partnership with us for the last few years and has proven to be an exemplary employer. BGB has a high achievement rate of over 90 per cent and nearly all apprentices remain working with the company. They provide tailored training which has proved extremely successful."

Employers can find out more about the Apprenticeship programme to help them get the workforce they need now and in the future by visiting:
www.apprenticeships.org.uk
 or telephone 08000 150 400



Lesley Parker of CILT receives their award from Stephen Smith, East Midlands Business.

Attracting talented young people

Sponsor: East Midlands Business Ltd.

Small Employer of the Year Award, 10-49 Employees: The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) in Corby, Northamptonshire.

CILT employs 41 people and has "placed Apprenticeships in the heart of our staff development programme," says marketing officer Fiona Furman. The organisation now has seven apprentices, which amounts to 17 per cent of the workforce.

The Institute works closely with training provider Starting Off whose managing director, Dale Willis, said: "They are very enthusiastic about training and show the highest level of support. This is

demonstrated through the extra learning that their apprentices have taken part in."

Dale said that when recruiting for CILT, they were able to attract talented young people to work for them on the strength of their commitment to supporting and encouraging role development.



Alexis McConnachie from Kingscliffe Day Nursery is presented with the Nursery's award by Stephen Smith from East Midlands Business.

Apprenticeships bring opportunities all round

Sponsor: East Midlands Business Ltd.

Micro Employer of the Year Award: Kingscliffe Day Nursery Ltd in Loughborough, Leicestershire

Kingscliffe helps schools and the local community colleges by allowing students to complete work experience with them - and gain insight into the possibility of choosing childcare as their career.

Manager and proprietor Alexis McConachie said: "We believe our approach is a positive example of what a true Apprenticeship should be: the opportunity for young adults to gain qualifications and experience within their chosen career and be provided with the opportunity for continuous training and development."

Ann Wright, regional manager at TNG Training which helps Kingscliffe structure its training, said: "Kingscliffe recruit from the local community and look for potential new team members through the work placements they offer."

Read about the other Award winners on Page 8.

Train to Gain – delivering skills solutions to business

Meeting the skills challenge continues to remain a top priority for all forward-looking businesses right across the region.

Under its **Train to Gain** service, the LSC in the East Midlands is delivering a dedicated range of services specifically designed to meet the requirements of all companies – irrespective of their size and sector.

A broadly-based service portfolio includes not only support and advice on recruitment, training and qualifications, but also on potential sources of funding to help carry through bespoke action plans.

Regional director of skills, Karen Woodward said: “We will put you in touch with the most appropriate organisation to deal with your skill needs, ensuring you have named contacts who will be responsible for developing an on-going relationship.

“Quite simply, our aim is to support your future recruitment and skills needs – helping your company to become more competitive against the background of an ever-changing and increasingly challenging business climate.”



The **Train to Gain** service offers employers:

Access to impartial, expert advice

A qualified skills broker will identify your business' skills needs - highlighting routes to a choice of tailored training options and any available funding which might support your recruitment and workforce development requirements.

Access to high quality, flexible training

Following an individual skills analysis of your employees, together with a funding eligibility appraisal, a quality assured provider will offer you a fully costed training action plan. Delivered primarily in the workplace, at a time and a place to suit you, the training plan is geared to recognised industry standards and qualifications.

Access to staff development subsidies

A number of public funding options can be considered covering:

- Fully subsidised training to address basic literacy, communications and numeracy needs.
- Fully subsidised training to help employees achieve a full Level 2 national vocational qualification (NVQ) – the equivalent of five good GCSEs at Grades A-C.
- A substantial subsidy (currently 67.5%) to support employees in gaining a Level 3 NVQ (equivalent to 2 'A levels'). Alternatively the subsidy could be used to support the language development of those workers where English is not their first language.
- A subsidy towards the delivery of Apprenticeships – available for both new and existing employees and open to all ages, with priority given to 16-18 year-olds. The aim is to provide a structured career development programme to nationally recognised and accredited standards

Access to wage cost support

If you employ less than 50 full time equivalent staff, a contribution can be made towards the wage costs of employees undertaking training in the workplace.

Access to leadership and management support

For businesses with between 10-200 employees, further public funding is available to support the crucial development of senior management personnel. A highly customised service, the aim is to develop a personal action plan, which can be subsidised by at least 50%, with a leadership and management specialist.

Access to pre-employment support

In partnership with Jobcentre Plus and Connexions, the LSC can support you in identifying appropriate new recruits who are currently not in employment. We can also support their skills development both before and after they start work.



L-r: Roger Martin, operations manager of employer engagement at WNC, Jane Gale, David Smith, Dianne Conroy, Phil Smith, partnership network manager at WNC

Training to Gain productivity

A textile-dyeing firm in Leicester has increased productivity by ten per cent after taking up funding from Train to Gain together with support from a specialist textile training company.

Apex Dyers and Finishers of Nansen Road in Leicester see their products end up all over the world but in a fiercely competitive climate they were keen not to take this for granted.

Market Driven Solutions Ltd (MDS), who deliver Train to Gain qualifications to help upskill the textiles workforce and help them compete more effectively with offshore competitors, found training to suit Apex's needs. Apex factory manager Paul McNeil explained: "We were particularly interested in improving our employees' awareness of health and safety and environmental issues, as dyeing houses have strict rules and regulations that they need to adhere to."



"MDS flawlessly extended the NVQ Performing Manufacturing Operations qualification to ensure all our specific requirements were met. The fact that many of the team at MDS are multi-lingual and can deliver training in a number of community languages was also helpful for some of our employees."

Funding and training for glaziers

Nottinghamshire family firm Dianne Smith Associates works in partnership with colleges locally and nationwide, helping tradesmen and apprentices to obtain the qualifications they need with help from Train To Gain.

Working with colleges like West Notts College (WNC) in Mansfield, the company is licensed by the Glass Qualifications Authority (GQA) to deliver NVQs in all types of architectural glazing as well as window and door installation and manufacturing. Tradesmen can obtain their CSCS card (Construction Skills Certification Scheme) which is required before they can work on commercial building sites.

Dianne Conroy, a qualified assessor and verifier for the glazing industry, set up the company four years ago, teaming up with her father David Smith who brought with him a great deal of building experience. Since then, the company's

growth has meant a move from Nottinghamshire Business Venture's start-up centre into much larger premises in Arnold.

"Companies are increasingly taking up places for Apprenticeships within the construction industry under the Train to Gain scheme," Dianne explained. Her company has access to funding which enables companies to obtain qualifications for staff free or with just a small contribution which, she says, is thanks to Train to Gain.

Phil Smith, partnership manager for WNC in Mansfield, said: "The company's work is very important in filling the skills gap within the construction industry. By qualifying their workforce, companies can work on major commercial construction sites. Without the qualifying programme, firms would only be able to work on small-scale domestic sites so it's vital work to the economy."



Currys Supply Staff with Skills for Life

More than 50 administration and warehouse employees at Currys' distribution centre in Newark are taking part in Skills for Life training funded by the LSC. Currys has paired up with Lincoln College to offer the training to its staff.

Gary Wheeler, Currys' learning and development advisor, said the company wanted to offer any employees who had left school with very few or no qualifications – and those from Poland and Lithuania with limited English skills – the chance to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Such skills made people more confident, he said, "which makes them more engaged in the company, and more proactive in the work they do, so they become more productive."

The Skills for Life programme entitles people without Level 2 literacy or numeracy skills to obtain these qualifications. Train to Gain funding is available to cover the cost of this training for employers.

To find out more about how Train To Gain can help your business, call 0800 015 55 45 or visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

How the LSC works with employers and partners

Effective engagement with employers in the region is crucial to the work that LSC East Midlands does in the region, said Karen Woodward, LSC director of regional skills.



Karen Woodward

"A prime example of this is our close partnership working with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to help unemployed people become work ready in response to the Government's welfare to work agenda," she explained.

The Government and National Apprenticeship Service target is for an extra 250,000 unemployed people to have entered employment through, or with support from, the new Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs) across nine regions by 2009-10.

"Our role within the LEPs is to provide pre-employment training – funded through 'Skills for Jobs' – to give people the skills they need to meet employer demand and enter employment," said Karen. "This means that employers can recruit new staff and have their recruitment and future training costs supported through JCP and the LSC."

LEPs aim to deliver real and tangible benefits for both employers and workers. As Karen Foulds, Customer Services Director of Jobcentre Plus told 130 of the region's employers earlier this year: "Employing local people who reflect the diversity of the local community can help make a business more profitable – people like to do business with employers who are seen to be doing this. Everybody benefits. Companies fill vacancies, people get into work, off benefits, into the economy and on to the skills ladder."

Karen Woodward is also keenly supportive of businesses backing each other. "Sharing knowledge is crucial to helping the business community prosper," she pointed out. "In the East Midlands we have more than 500 volunteer Business Champions who are committed to energising the region and developing competitiveness by sharing their commercial perspective."

The Business Champions initiative was launched by emda in 2000. As Ambassadors for the East Midlands, their role includes acting as mentors to new enterprises and growing businesses, supporting the community through educational and voluntary sectors, helping disadvantaged areas in the region and promoting the region overseas as well as at home.

"This is partnership working at its best," said Karen.

More Science and Engineering Ambassadors in the pipeline

Plans are afoot to increase the number of ambassadors working to enthuse young people about engineering and science careers.

The Government is planning to expand its Science and Engineering Ambassador scheme into all schools and colleges, increasing the current numbers of ambassadors from 18,000 to 27,000 by 2011. Ambassadors work with students in several ways, including supporting school science and engineering clubs, assisting with school science competitions or offering advice and mentoring to students.

Working together for greater productivity

Engineering firms from across the region took part in a celebration in June to mark the success of a scheme to help improve their productivity and profitability. During the past three years, 50 short courses on a range of manufacturing techniques were delivered to 57 firms.

One of the companies taking part in the project was Hodgson and Hodgson of Melton Mowbray which signed up to the LSC's Science, Engineering and the Manufacturing Technologies (Semta) courses designed to help firms competing in international market places. Semta, a government licensed, employer-led organisation, aims to raise engineering skills.

Hodgson and Hodgson, which employs nearly 100 staff at its Crown Industrial Estate works where it makes thermal and acoustic insulation, introduced changes in the workplace following the course – and noted commercial benefits as a result.

Family-run business Mason and King in Leicester, manufacturer of precision sheet metal assemblies, found the scheme led to significant improvements in communication between employees. Operations manager Andrew Mason said more staff were now planning ahead, being proactive, and taking personal responsibility for what they do.

If you are interested in becoming an Ambassador, you will need to:

- complete a registration form, which you can download from the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network (STEMNET): www.stemnet.org.uk and return it to STEMNET
- attend an induction briefing, which will be held in your local area and will prepare you for your first activity as an Ambassador
- undergo a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check which is a compulsory requirement for anyone wishing to be a Science and Engineering Ambassador

Ambassadors are expected to support at least one activity per year, and you will be expected to get involved in a variety of other local activities.

For more details about the Ambassador scheme, please visit:
www.stemnet.org.uk
or telephone STEMNET on 020 3206 0450

The Skills Pledge: One year on

Launched in 2007, the Skills Pledge is a public commitment made by organisations to support the skills development of all its employees to a minimum of NVQ level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs). Here, we highlight some of the latest organisations to make their Pledge,

Pledging to improve skills

NHS Employers

Healthcare bosses across Nottinghamshire are joining forces to ensure that the NHS has one of the highest skilled workforces in the region. Chief executives from NHS organisations in the county made the Skills Pledge – which encourages employers to commit to create a world-class workforce – in June.

The Skills Pledge will help drive future investment along with the Joint Investment Framework (JIF) – a ground-breaking scheme agreed in July 2007 between the LSC, Skills for Health and the East Midlands Strategic Health Authorities. JIF will see up to £100m of extra funds being injected annually into the health service in England to tackle skills gaps over a three-year period.

Jeffrey Worrall, chief executive of Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and Mike Walker, interim director of workforce from Nottinghamshire County Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT), said they could now support their staff in achieving qualifications that would increase their confidence and enable their career progression within the NHS. All this would benefit the individual, the team and the organisation as a whole.

Leicester City Council

Leicester City Council workers are to get help to develop literacy and numeracy skills after council bosses signed up to the National Skills Pledge. Training will be paid for by the LSC.

Mary Rogers, area director for the LSC Leicestershire, said: "By 2020 there will be three million fewer jobs requiring unskilled workers, and five million more jobs requiring skilled workers. Improving the skills of its workforce will help the council to make sure it can continue to run a successful organisation."

Councillor Abdul Osman, cabinet member for human resources, said, "the training would enable all employees who wanted to do so to achieve a Level 2 qualification."



Produce company plans skills for success

Branston Ltd, one of the UK's biggest buyers, packers, distributors and marketers of potatoes, is offering basic skills training for its entire staff. The company signed up to the Skills Pledge to ensure that all employees are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to Branston's success.

A launch event at the company's Lincoln site gave staff the chance to sign up for Skills for Life sessions in basic maths or English. Training provider ISIS was on site with information to help them make informed decisions.

Branston's finance director Julie McTurk said the company had wanted a training plan that would meet its needs and those of individuals. It was also a priority to help some of its migrant workers improve their English so that the company could be sure that training and health and safety instructions were understood.

"We contacted the Learning and Skills Council to find out more about their Train to Gain service and they told us about the Skills Pledge," Julie said. "It seemed like the obvious next step for us."

Jenny Stainton, skills broker for Train to Gain Lincolnshire and Rutland, commented: "Skills are vitally important for individuals, for their future employability and for the success of businesses throughout the region and UK."

Skills Bring Success

We tell the stories of three of our Regional Apprenticeship Award winners on Page 3. Here, we complete the list of winners from the East Midlands, and pay tribute to their success.



Roy Bilton, left, from Siemens Industrial Turbomachinery Ltd with Stephen Smith from East Midlands Business Ltd

Large Employer of the Year Award (over 250 employees): Siemens Industrial Turbomachinery Ltd in Lincoln, employs 2000 people, 68 of whom are undertaking Engineering Apprenticeships with learning provider Lincoln College.

Young Apprentice of the Year Award: Luke Kemp, 16, from Grantham, Lincolnshire, who is undertaking a Young Apprenticeship in Engineering with Yes Training – Grantham College, and worked at BGB Engineering full-time during the school holidays.

Entry to Employment (e2e) Learner of the Year Award: Denise Dad, 19, from Normanton, Derbyshire, who has finished an e2e programme with the Carter & Carter Group and since progressed to an Access Course at Derby University.

Personal Achiever of the Year Award: Sean Butt, 23, from Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Nottinghamshire. Sean completed an Advanced Apprenticeship in Hairdressing at New College Nottingham and subsequently became head colour technician at Toni & Guy in Mansfield.

Apprentice of the Year Award – Apprenticeship: Sam Barstow, 19, from Lincoln. Sam is working towards his Apprenticeship in Business Administration Level 2 at Lincoln College and has recently started working part-time at Lincolnshire County Council as a youth development support worker.

Apprentice of the Year Award – Advanced Apprenticeship: Gemma Barrett, 25, from Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, completed her Advanced Apprenticeship in Hospitality and Supervision with Charnwood Training Consultants in Nottingham. She is now the owner of Carol's Cobs – supplying lunch to local businesses and catering for buffets and special events – and employs six staff.



Tom Crompton

Director focuses on high quality learning

LSC East Midlands' new regional director Tom Crompton is setting his sights on furthering the delivery of high quality learning that responds to the needs of employers.

Taking up his appointment following former director Verity Bullough's acceptance of a new post at LSC national office, he said: "I am keen to really get under the skin of the region, to understand what makes it tick and to identify strategies that will improve learning and skills opportunities and provision for all."

Previously area director of LSC County Durham and Tees Valley, he added:

"Learning is a thread that has run throughout my career and I am determined to focus this passion in a way that will benefit the East Midlands."

Tom joined the senior management team of Tyneside Training and Enterprise Council in 1991 to lead its work on linking business and education. He became assistant chief executive in 1996 and has worked on several national bodies on behalf of the TEC's national council and Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). He was also chairman of the Newcastle Literacy Trust and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. In 2001 the TEC and FEFC became the LSC and Tom continued in his career with the LSC.

New accreditation system addresses UK skills gap

Training providers and employers have joined forces to officially launch a new certification system for delivering specialist excellence to help fill the UK skills gap.

The Training Quality Standard is designed to recognise and celebrate organisations delivering the best training and development solutions to employers. It was developed and is accredited by employers, ensuring that the criteria set for achieving the standard reflect what the employers want.

"We believe that this new Standard will help to tackle the current mismatch between the competencies required by employers and those the qualifications system provides," said Francis Lawlar, quality director LSC East Midlands.

Informally launched last year, the Standard has already awarded certification to 31 providers around the UK, including Derby College.

For more information about Training Quality Standard visit www.trainingqualitystandard.co.uk