

# Business Briefing

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## Apprenticeships all set to win global skills race

As the Apprenticeship success story continues to grow, businesses throughout the East Midlands are to be given a massive boost in setting up places.



Mick Brown

Plans to increase Apprenticeships by thousands are part of the Government's promise to help employers unlock Britain's talent.

From April 2009 the region's Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will help deliver the new National Apprenticeship Service, which is to be formed within the LSC. The size of the task is reflected in Prime Minister Gordon Brown's wish to see one in five young people on Apprenticeships within ten years in a push to win the global 'skills race.'

Acting regional director Mick Brown said that employers who upskilled their staff were making a sound investment in their workforce. "Whether the Apprenticeships they choose relate to the organisation's core purpose or to the work of ancillary staff, they all add to the learning ethic and strengthen the business," he pointed out.

"We have been working closely with the Further Education system and have already attracted a record number of apprentices and employers. As the numbers have risen, so has the quality of Apprenticeships and the rates of completion.

"As we deliver Apprenticeships ever more widely, we will continue to strike the best deal for employers, young people and adults," he said. "This will also mean reaching out to those who haven't so far considered the all-round value of Apprenticeships."

Support is already being offered to firms like McDonald's, Network Rail and the Flybe airline, all of which are awarding their own nationally recognised training qualifications such as in-house diplomas.

Welcoming the move to get more people on to the Apprenticeship programme, CBI Deputy Director-General John Cridland commented: "We need more young people taking on-the-job training and gaining qualifications that provide access to exciting and well-paid careers, as well as delivering skills that businesses need to compete."

He believed that setting up a National Apprenticeship Service to deliver and be fully accountable for the programme, and creating a 'matching service' to help employers fill Apprenticeship vacancies, were positive steps.

The Government announced its strategy for the future of Apprenticeships in England at the end of January. Part of a wide ranging strategy on welfare reform, it plans to work with employers to help build a workforce that has the world-class skills it needs in an increasingly challenging global economy. The details are set out in its publications *Ready to work, skilled for work: unlocking Britain's talent and Apprenticeships*, *Unlocking Talent*, *Building Skills for All*. [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

### Apprenticeships significantly improve business performance

This is the view of most employers who took part in a survey on behalf of the LSC earlier this year. The findings showed that:

- 77 per cent of employers believe Apprenticeships make them more competitive
- 76 per cent say Apprenticeships provide higher overall productivity
- 80 per cent feel that Apprenticeships reduce staff turnover.

# A TASTE OF SUCCESSFUL APPRENTICESHIPS ACROSS THE REGION



**Apprentice Sabrina McClumpha and GB Eventer Jeanette Brakewell with Ideal Sebastian whose stable name is Seb Coe.**

When Olympic star and international event rider Jeanette Brakewell of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire needed to branch out and expand her team, she took on an apprentice to train in a real working situation. Since then she has trained four more apprentices, and one is now the head groom.

The European Eventing Gold medallist, twice Olympic Silver and World Silver medallist found that training her own staff not only enabled them to achieve invaluable qualifications but also led to "a great sense of teamwork and loyalty." She added: "They are highly motivated and keen to progress with their learning as they move towards their goal."

Jeanette worked with Chesterfield-based Stubbing Court Training Ltd on a horse care Apprenticeship programme designed to achieve the high standards and efficiency vital for her organisation. "We provide a wonderful opportunity to gain experience at a world-class level," she said.

**"83 per cent of employers rely on their Apprenticeship programme to provide the skilled workers they need for the future"**

– Research conducted on behalf of the LSC earlier this year.

Woodborough Hall hotel and restaurant in Nottingham has supported 15 trainees through Apprenticeship programmes in recent years. "By training learners on the job it enables us to move forward, increasing productivity whilst creating a team of motivated young learners that will eventually become outstanding chefs who take great pride in their work," executive head chef Des Sweeney said.

Woodborough Hall works together with learning provider New College Nottingham to implement the training, which is a fundamental part of their business plan.



**HR manager Richard Dalton, left, with apprentice printer Ashaur Rahman.**

Print specialists Belmont Press Ltd, based in Northampton, has run the Apprenticeship work-based training programme for seven years, helping to ensure a steady supply of well-trained and highly skilled labour. Managing director Trevor Thomas said: "The majority of our learners have progressed with the company to become skilled operators, supplying us with a workforce which has nationally recognised qualifications and is familiar with our technology and procedures."

Belmont Press has helped 26 learners complete Apprenticeship programmes and currently employs six apprentices. Their competency in

operating a range of equipment enables flexibility of deployment throughout the factory.

Personnel manager Richard Dalton said that the careful selection of learners demonstrating both the ability and the desire to learn had "reaped rewards of increased profitability and employee satisfaction."

**Ivor Hallam, left, and apprentice Scott Dye.**

Ivor Hallam, proprietor of Ivor Hallam Motor Engineers in Lincoln, has found the Apprenticeship programme to be a "real success" for the company. "I aim to provide opportunities to young people within the business and they benefit from the training I am able to offer, whilst the business benefits from their loyalty, passion and commitment," he said.



**Apprentice Danielle Moore and business owner Scott Bailye.**

Once an apprentice himself, involving apprentices with his salon was particularly important to hairdresser Scott Bailye of Leicester. Currently, four of his 12 employees are in training for either an Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship.

Scott commented: "Training prompts employers and employees to make a difference; this in turn makes a difference to the business. Staff retention levels improve when people are encouraged to develop their knowledge and skills, and this keeps them motivated to do well."

Jacquelyn Shelton, team leader at training provider North Warwickshire & Hinckley College, spoke of Scott's "driving passion for the industry which transmits to his apprentices to help maximise their potential." His approach to training and promoting his industry includes holding demonstrations and training sessions at the college, local community centres, Women's Institutes and local schools.

One apprentice recently passed NVQ Level 3 and is now taking the Vehicle MOT course. Another, who has been with the company for 25 years, is now the foreman. Over the years, the company has also offered work experience to 26 young people from the Entry to Employment programme at learning provider HBS Options.

**Employers can find out how on and off the job learning with the Apprenticeship programme help them get the workforce they need now and in the future by visiting: [www.apprenticeships.org.uk/wanttoemployanapprentice](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/wanttoemployanapprentice) 08000 150 400**

## High quality training planned in the health sector

Training aimed at raising skill levels and qualifications in the health sector is to be financed with the help of the LSC East Midlands. Over the next three years up to £30m of additional funds will be delivered into the region's health service to tackle skills gaps and shortages.

The LSC has entered into a joint investment framework agreement involving the NHS in the region and Skills for Health (the sector skills council for the healthcare sector). This commits the LSC East Midlands to match funding of up to £5 million each year for three years to train staff without professional qualifications.

Julie Mather, the regional skills development manager - sectors, commented: "We have a shared ambition to deliver skills, learning and qualifications to improve patient care and the delivery of services across the sector."

Activity is expected to focus largely on raising the skill levels and qualifications for some 56,000 healthcare employees. It will fund training primarily through the Train to Gain service alongside NHS inhouse training providers and will cover all occupational areas.

## Apprentices help take businesses forward in the East Midlands

Apprenticeships are growing throughout the region, bringing skills and knowledge to the thousands of businesses that help promote and support them. There are currently more than 160 Apprenticeships across 80 industry sectors, with 250,000 apprentices now taking part.

Karen Woodward, LSC East Midlands director of skills, said: "The benefits of Apprenticeships for employers include improved productivity, motivated people and relevant training specially designed by businesses in your sector to meet your specific needs. Apprenticeships allow you to invest in your business's future."

## Engineering firm's Advanced Apprenticeships

Siemens, the Lincoln industrial turbine business, were in the process of recruiting 17 people last month to join their Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering programme. The company also revealed plans to move to a new site in North Hykeham, generating £40m of investment into the local area over the next three years and demonstrating its long-term commitment to manufacturing and the area.

# Growing your business through greater access to training

Businesses across the East Midlands are benefiting from a huge extension of the LSC's Train to Gain service thanks to a doubling of funding by the Government.



Tony Belmega

It means that every company will be able to identify and meet their skills needs and access appropriate training. And, in a trial addition to the service, employers in the region can claim two thirds of the cost of a first and/or second Level 3 qualification for their staff – equivalent to an NVQ Level 3 or two 'A' Levels. But they need to be quick because funding for this pilot runs out in July.

The extra funding is part of a massive investment programme announced by John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills. More than £11 billion a year is to be invested in education, employment and training across the UK.

Tony Belmega, LSC East Midlands Train to Gain director, said: "Train to Gain has made a positive impact on businesses across the region and the number of companies that have signed up and benefited from training has been really encouraging. From its launch in August 2006 up to December last year, Train to Gain has already helped more than

26,000 employees with training from over 5,000 of the region's organisations."

He continued: "From small companies with just one employee, like Ray Hamblin Mechanics in Gainsborough, to large businesses who employ thousands of staff like Chubb Security Personnel Ltd in Northamptonshire, they've all been able to take advantage of the use of a specialised skills brokerage service and get advice and guidance on training."

He added: "Things like additional funding, more money for management training for smaller businesses over the next three years, and an increase in skills brokers who can offer specialist support is all great news for East Midlands businesses."

Other benefits from the expanding service include the offer of additional funding for a broader range of skills. Part funding will now be available for those doing a second full Level 2 qualification and funding for Level 3 will be increased nationally. Skills for Life training will now be supported as a stand alone offer as well as part of a full Level 2 qualification.

Tony stressed the importance of training in improving business productivity and competitiveness. "Yet one in three businesses in the region are still not offering training to their staff," he said. "I'd encourage all businesses to get in touch to find out about the new additions to the service and how they can benefit."

## Congratulations!

**A big hand for all those businesses that have benefited from Train to Gain in the East Midlands! To name just a few...**

Assembly and distribution specialists **Pearson Hydraulics Ltd of Lincoln** helped two employees get started on a Customer Service NVQ Level 2. Two other employees have embarked on the Institute of Leadership and Management NVQ Level 2.

Joinery manufacturer **Jeld-Wen UK of Melton Mowbray** secured the skills of seven of its carpenters by gaining them places on the Construction Skills Certificate NVQ Level 2 in joinery.

**Radford and Hyson Green Neighbourhood Development Company in Nottingham** sourced the best IT training courses available for almost half of its office-based workforce, which changed the way they work.

Computer Services and Solutions company **Sharpe Systems of Killmarsh near Sheffield** achieved 80 per cent growth after receiving advice from a Train to Gain skills broker to join a mentoring scheme and receive marketing guidance through an external agency.

**Rushden-based Humanware in Northamptonshire** recruited 18-year-old Ben Symonds, giving him the chance to learn new skills whilst earning money and building a career. He will be working towards an Apprenticeship in Electronics Servicing and Repair at the Tresham Institute in Corby.

# Developing workforce skills with Train to Gain



**"50 per cent profit over the last two years"**

Architect Darryn Buttrill contacted Train to Gain skills broker Geraldine Wilson for help with sourcing relevant and training to suit his business – and he has achieved a 50 per cent increase in profit over the last two years.

Changes that Darryn introduced at Bi Design Architecture in Repton, Derbyshire, involved one of his six employees working on and completing an NVQ in Business Administration at Burton on Trent Technical College, and another enrolling for an HNC in Construction at the college.



Darryn himself joined a mentoring programme of 15 half-day sessions. This meant that he could talk to a business professional about issues such as staff recruitment and general business management.

Darryn commented: "I now feel far more confident in how I run my business. Operationally the business is better managed, and the investment I have made in staff training and development has really paid off with higher retention and greater output."

**"It has been so successful"**

The operations manager of a Leicestershire stone crushing machinery company teamed up with a Train to Gain skills broker and a local training provider to devise a successful training plan for two of its after sales employees.

John Gage of Central Crusher and Screening Systems in Newbold said: "Training our staff helps them develop new skills and learn about how business works, which is great for both them and us. It has been so successful that we are planning to take another young recruit on later in the year."

Train to Gain skills broker James Lund commented: "Developing skills across the county is vital to increase productivity, support advances in enterprise and innovation and improve our economic well being."

**"Being the best at what we do"**

A Loughborough landscaping company is reaping the rewards of helping its staff be the best at what they do. Thirteen forklift truck drivers with Brett Landscaping have completed Level 2 NVQs with Train to Gain.

Production manager Duncan Robertson said: "We are committed to giving our workforce the chance to develop their skills and qualifications, which they will be able to put into practice here and use long into the future."

Forklift truck driver Simon Titchener commented: "It's great to know that the company I work for is so keen to help us be the best at what we do."



**To find out more about how Train To Gain can help your business, call 0800 015 55 45 or visit [www.traintogain.gov.uk](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk)**



## Business benefits from employing ex-offenders

Employers are being urged to reap the benefits of employing ex-offenders. Justice Minister David Hanson joined Jane Peacock, the regional LSC's Skills Development Director, in delivering the message at a Committed to Work conference in Nottingham earlier this year.

Jane told the delegates of "the very real business benefits that ex-offenders can bring in terms of filling skills gaps." Linda Jones of the National Offender Management Service spoke of the impact that having a job has on reducing re-offending and crime. "We know, too, as an employer, what commitment an offender can bring to a job if only given a chance," she said.

Dianah Worman of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development maintained: "Employers cannot afford to miss out on these pools of talent. There are agencies to help and work with employers on all aspects, so that this can be a positive step forward in helping to fill employment gaps, providing benefits across society and for the ex-offender themselves."

### Filling the gap... building your business

From market gardening and brick laying to catering and concrete production, inmates at Ranby Prison are learning the skills to take out into the community. But it doesn't stop there. Sue Bance, head of Learning and Skills at HMP Ranby, says they are also being helped to develop other important skills that employers want – like getting to work on time, working hard and diligently, and working to the needs of the business.

Work skills that come out of Ranby include railway maintenance, painting and decorating, welding, block paving and many more across the construction, logistics, utilities and hospitality services. Skills that many employers need to fill the gap.

## Making the connection between young people and employers

A vacancy handling service to help employers recruit young people is one of a number of cost-free facilities offered by Connexions.

Job vacancies can be advertised on a dedicated website for young people and matched to Connexions' comprehensive database of clients registered with them as seeking work or training. Other ways in which Connexions can help employers include:

- providing advice on Apprenticeships and updates on the latest education initiatives and qualifications
- advice on legislation affecting young people at work such as the right to time off for study and training.

Invaluable support from employers includes providing work-based opportunities with training for young people and supporting effective skills development by providing community mentors and offering work experience opportunities.

**Contact your local Connexions Service to find out more about services or getting involved:**

**Derbyshire:** Central Vacancy Unit on 0845 606 66 67

**Leicestershire:** Connexions Employer Services Team on 0800 083 3788

**Lincolnshire:** Central Vacancy Unit on 01522 875490

**Rutland:** Central Vacancy Unit on 01522 875490

**Nottinghamshire:** Central Vacancy Service on 0845 850 8899.

**Northamptonshire:** Central Vacancy Unit on 01604 614939.

## Vocational courses help bridge the skills gap

Oftsted's findings that post-16 vocational college courses are providing the relevant skills to meet industry needs have been welcomed by LSC East Midlands chairman John Kirkland.

"The good practice survey earlier this year found that the best colleges had strong links with industry," said John. "I was also delighted to note that in all of the colleges surveyed, students were able to gain practical experience in using the latest industry standard equipment."

## Pledging to raise skills and job prospects

More than 130 employers and organisations from across the East Midlands were urged to sign up to the Skills Pledge at a dinner in Nottingham and make a public, voluntary commitment to investing in education and training.



Karen Woodward

Part of the drive to raise the region's skills levels and lead to greater business success, the event – organised in January by LSC and Jobcentre Plus – prompted 40 expressions of interest which were followed through almost immediately afterwards.

Delighted with the response, Karen Woodward, LSC East Midlands director of skills, commented: "This boosted the number of employers who had already signed the Skills Pledge in the region to over 200. These include small, specialised companies in the East

Midlands like Gadsby's bakery in Southwell, Nottinghamshire, and we hope that more will follow suit. Skills are vitally important for individuals' future employability and to fill vacancies."

She added: "By signing up to the Skills Pledge, employers will have the help and advice of a skills broker, which is part of the LSC's Train to Gain service. Through them, they can access free literacy, numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses as well as numerous partially subsidised activities."

Karen Foulds, customer services director of Jobcentre Plus, spoke at the event of the "real and tangible" benefits that the new Jobs Pledge and Local Employment Partnerships (LEPS) will deliver. Businesses are being asked to recruit long-term benefit claimants who are at a disadvantage in the labour market but could provide a real advantage to the organisation.

**For more information about making the Skills Pledge please phone 0800 015 5545 or visit [www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge](http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge)**

## It's a Pledge for success

Nottingham-based Care Training was one of the first companies in the country to make the Skills Pledge. Since then every member of staff has either achieved NVQ Level 2 standard or is working towards it, with some achieving Levels 3 or 4.

Managing director Rita Ford said: "By raising skills levels across your entire company you can improve performance, become more competitive and boost morale. I really hope that more Nottinghamshire and East Midlands companies make the Skills Pledge this year."

## Publisher's Skills Pledge leads to good news all round



Darren Maskell at work on one of Mortons' magazines.

Low absence levels, good staff retention and increased efficiency are among the benefits a Lincolnshire publishing company have experienced through a commitment to training.

Mortons of Horncastle Ltd, publishers of magazines covering subjects like classic motorbikes and organic gardening as well as print newspapers, made a Skills Pledge to commit to train all of their staff up to a Level 2 (equivalent to five GCSE at grade A-C) or an NVQ Level 2. They have recently trained 13 of their 240 employees to NVQ Level 2 in Pre-Press through Train to Gain at the accredited National Printing Skills Centre, part of Leicester College.

HR manager Michael Gill said: "We embrace a learning culture across the business. We are an Investor in People and a Skills for Life ambassador. The Skills Pledge gives us the chance to make a more public commitment to training our workforce and gives a positive message to staff."

Employee Jonathan Schofield, who took part in a course run in conjunction with his work and was assessed on site, commented: "I thought I knew everything I needed to do my job but the course showed me that I was only really skimming the surface. I am now learning and developing new skills that I had previously not even considered."

# Rewarding times for Apprenticeships

The smiles say it all! Our picture gallery shows some of the region's Apprenticeship Award 2007 winners.



Ivor Hallam Motors



Scotts Hair Design



Belmont Press



Scott Bailye

## You're hired! TV apprentice highlights National Apprenticeship Week

Kristina Grimes, the runner-up in the recent BBC TV series *The Apprentice*, knows through her own TV reality experience that Apprenticeships offer a 'win win' situation, with benefits for young people and for employers.

A former pharmaceutical sales manager, Kristina helped put the spotlight on the first ever National Apprenticeship Week organised by the LSC in February when she visited an international logistics and distribution company in Northampton – Mainland Group Limited employs seven apprentices across various departments.

Over in Leicestershire, engineering experts from **Slack & Parr** also highlighted National Apprenticeship Week when delivering a full day's workshop to pupils at Shepshed High School. Slack & Parr have been training up apprentices since the 1960s, but have noticed a skills drought in manufacturing and engineering in recent years. There are currently 3,625 apprentices in the Leicestershire region.

## Heating up the competition!

Catering students throughout the East Midlands are being invited to take part in a series of hospitality master classes. Run by First College Skegness, which is a Centre of Vocational Excellence, they are part of a programme of UK Skills master classes funded by the LSC.

Lincolnshire and Rutland area director Nick Rashley said: "It is hoped that some of these learners may have the opportunity to compete at a national level in the UK World Skills competitions or to represent our country at the next World Skills event in 2009."

For more information visit  
[www.ukskills.org.uk](http://www.ukskills.org.uk)  
Competition hotline 0800 6120742

## DID YOU KNOW?

An LSC survey of 10,000 learners on workless benefits up and down the country has revealed that since completing an FE course:

- 41 per cent of those interviewed in the East Midlands have worked, and one in three had moved off benefits and into employment.
- Nationally, learners cited the main barriers to their employment as caring responsibilities (41 per cent) and health reasons (35 per cent). Less than a quarter said they were not in work due to lack of jobs where they lived.
- The primary motivation for people receiving workless benefits to participate in learning was to 'help get new skills' or 'update skills.'
- Overall, people who were more disadvantaged tended to benefit more highly from the personal and social outcomes of learning such as increased confidence and taking part in voluntary and community activities.
- There were similar levels of agreement across all regions that learning had a positive effect on making new friends, feeling better about themselves generally and giving them a sense of more opportunities.