

130 EAST MIDLANDS EMPLOYERS ATTEND EVENT TO BOOST THE REGION'S SKILLS AND JOB PROSPECTS

Date of issue 04.02.08

At least 130 employers and organisations from across the East Midlands attended an event last week (30 January 08) to highlight the need to raise the region's skills levels and improve people's chances of finding a job.

The event in Nottingham was organised by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Jobcentre Plus to explain to local employers how they can take part in this massive push to raise skills levels, improve the quality of learning, boost people's job prospects and fill vacancies in their organisations.

Employers at the event heard about the Skills Pledge – a public commitment to train all staff to a minimum NVQ level. They also learned about Local Employment Partnerships, the new Jobs Pledge and how they can address today's recruitment challenges.

More than 850 companies nationally have so far made the Skills Pledge, from big names like Kwik Fit, Shell and Center Parcs to small specialised companies such as Mortons of Gainsborough Ltd and Gadsby's bakery in Southwell. The Pledge involves making a commitment to train every member of staff to a minimum of NVQ level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs).

Many local employers will be able to attract funding towards this sort of training and get free assistance from a specialist Skills Broker who would help them identify training needs and draw up an action plan.

Verity Bullough, Regional Director, LSC East Midlands, said:

"Skills are vitally important for individuals, for their future employability and for the success of businesses throughout the UK. By signing up to the Skills Pledge companies are making a public, voluntary commitment to investing in education and training helping them reap the benefits with dramatic improvements in attainment.

"We want to encourage all employers across the East Midlands to sign up to the Skills Pledge. By making a commitment to the Skills Pledge employers will also have access to a Skills Broker, part of the LSC's Train to Gain service, through whom they can access free literacy, numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses as well as a range of partially subsidised activities. "

Karen Foulds , Customer Services Director of Jobcentre Plus spoke about the new Jobs Pledge and Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs). She said:

"This initiative is new and exciting and the benefits it will deliver for business, government and the workers of the region are real and tangible.

The country still faces major challenges such as child poverty – through LEPs and Jobs Pledges we can help make a real difference.

Employing local people that 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.

We are asking for a pledge from businesses to recruit people who are at a disadvantage in the labour market but that could provide a real advantage to the organisation. These are the long-term benefit claimants who represent an increasingly important proportion of the available workforce and who are being actively supported to return to work."

We currently have 55 employers committed in the East Midlands, and the government's aim is to secure commitment for around 250,000 job opportunities nationally."

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Notes to Editors:

- Photograph shows Verity Bullough of LSC addressing the event. Other photos available from GNN on 0115 9712787
- 1. 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.
- 2. The Skills Pledge is a voluntary commitment by employers to increasing the skills of their workforce for the benefit of the business.

Issued on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council by Government News Network (GNN) East Midlands. For media interviews or for further information contact Helen Clarke at GNN East Midlands on 0115 9712787