

Produce company looks to build key skills

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A national company with a Lincoln head office has made a public commitment to offer basic maths and English training for its entire staff.

Branston Ltd, whose head office is just outside the village of Branston, four miles south of Lincoln, is one of the biggest buyers, packers, distributors and marketers of potatoes in the UK. Yesterday the company signed up to the Learning and Skills Council's Skills Pledge, a public commitment to support the skills development of all its employees to a minimum of NVQ level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs), to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company.

Julie McTurk, Finance Director at Branston, said: "We started looking at putting together a training plan for the whole company – something that would allow everyone on the site to get involved, and that would meet both their individual needs, and the company's needs. We also have some migrant workers here, and it's become a priority for us to help some of them improve their English so that we can be sure that training and health and safety instructions are understood.

"We contacted the Learning and Skills Council to find out more about their Train to Gain scheme, which provides brokers to help match training providers to companies with a training need, and they told us about the Skills Pledge.

"It seemed like the obvious next step for us. We wanted to make it clear that we are totally committed to providing staff training, and to show how important it is to us. The Skills Pledge is the perfect way of doing that."

Train to Gain is a skills brokerage service, managed and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), that helps employers find the training they need for their employees. Train to Gain links employers with skills brokers who work individually with them to find out what their employees' training needs are, work out a training plan, and then help to find the right training for them. The service is free and impartial.

Jenny Stainton, Skills Broker for Train to Gain Lincolnshire and Rutland, 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 Branston Ltd is making a commitment to investing in the education and training of its staff and supporting them to achieve Level 2 qualifications.

"We would encourage other businesses and organisations across the East Midlands to sign up to the Skills Pledge, and would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in finding out more about the Train to Gain skills brokerage service."

A launch event at the company's Lincoln site gave staff the chance to find out more about the opportunities available and sign up for Skills for Life sessions in basic maths or English. Training provider ISIS was on site with laptops and other information to help staff make informed decisions.

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Notes to Editors:

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.
3. For more information about the Skills Pledge visit www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge
4. For more information about Train to Gain visit www.traintogain.gov.uk or contact Jenny Stainton on 07920 862 953 or jenny.stainton@eastmidlandsbusiness.co.uk

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