

Health Sector Employers Pledge to Improve Skills

THOUSANDS of patients in across the East Midlands are to benefit from improved health services – thanks to a new pledge to improve skills across the healthcare sector.

NHS East Midlands has pledged to improve healthcare by making a commitment to support and encourage healthcare staff to gain skills and qualifications to help their career development, boost their confidence and, subsequently, improve patient care.

By signing up to the Skills Pledge at the Skills for Health East Midlands Sector Skills Agreement consultation event on 3rd April, NHS East Midlands has promised to up-skill and support its own employees to work towards relevant qualifications. Four other NHS organisations also signed the Skills Pledge on April 3rd and the SHA will encourage all the NHS employers in the East Midlands to do likewise.

NHS East Midlands currently has around 90,500 staff employed through NHS organisations across the East Midlands so signing of the Skills Pledge will benefit significant numbers of patients.

Janet Monkman, director of workforce, NHS East Midlands, said: “We are delighted to be a partner in the Joint Investment Framework. In the NHS, the people that patients come into contact with the most often are staff working in support roles such as receptionists, care workers, porters or cleaners. Therefore, the development of this part of our workforce is an essential part of providing excellent care. The new Joint Investment Framework will have a direct and tangible impact on improving the knowledge and skills of these staff and the care they offer to patients.”

The signing of the Skills Pledge, part of a plan to equip Britain's workforce for the future and develop world-class skills by 2020, has been driven by a Joint Investment Framework (JIF) between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Skills for Health, and the East Midlands SHA. The partnership is focused on developing skills, learning and qualifications among NHS employees.

A JIF partnership manager will now work with NHS employers and employees to ensure access to the right type of training for each individual to ensure they achieve and progress. The training offered includes literacy, numeracy and first full Level 2 qualification courses (equivalent to five good GCSE passes) as well as a range of partially subsidised higher level courses.

Karen Woodward, LSC director of skills, said: "The JIF is groundbreaking in making the significant step forward to the public sector actively engaging in the training and development of their entire workforce using public funding for entitlement to qualifications."

Pippa Hodgson, regional director, East Midlands, for Skills for Health added: "It is encouraging to see healthcare employers in the region supporting the Skills Pledge and showing enthusiasm about the opportunities the Joint Investment Framework offers. This provides a very sound basis from which to take forward the actions that will emerge from the Sector Skills Agreement Consultation process in the East Midlands".

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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.

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary public commitment open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors. It is aimed at increasing the skills of their workforce for the benefit of the business. www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge/

2: 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.

Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30 for more information.

3: Skills for Health is the Sector Skills Council for UK health, funded by the four UK health departments in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; the Sector Skills Development Agency; the education act regulatory bodies; and health sector employers and providers.

The 25 Sector Skills Councils which make up the Skills for Business Network are licensed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in consultation with Ministers from the devolved administrations. Each one has a sector ‘footprint’ and central goals to address skills gaps and shortages; improve productivity and performance; increase opportunities to boost skills; and improve learning supply.

Skills for Health’s sector footprint covers the entire National Health Service and the whole of the independent and voluntary healthcare sectors across the UK - which collectively employ approximately two million people. The majority of occupations are linked to hospital activities and community health services, but the sector also includes general medical and dental practitioners and healthcare professionals working in nursing homes and private surgeries, and retail outlets such as pharmacists, opticians and self-employed practitioners.

The overarching remit of Skills for Health is to ultimately help improve health and healthcare by assisting the whole healthcare sector in developing solutions which deliver a skilled and flexible UK workforce.

Specific Skills for Health aims are to:

- profile the UK healthcare sector workforce
- develop and manage national workforce competences across the UK healthcare sector
- influence UK education and training supply to meet healthcare sector needs
- improve the workforce skills of the UK healthcare sector
- work with partners to achieve these aims.

Further information about Skills for Health and its work can be found at www.skillsforhealth.org.uk