

SKILLS MINISTER URGES EAST MIDLANDS FIRMS TO MAKE THE UK A WORLD LEADER IN SKILLS BY 2020: LEICESTER COMPANIES LEAD THE WAY

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Skills Minister Lord Tony Young has thanked regional businesses for making the Skills Pledge and committing to their workforce, stressing that if the UK is to become a world leader in Skills by 2020, then more firms across the East Midlands need to make the pledge.

Speaking at the National Space Centre in Leicester, at an event organised by the Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce in association with the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, to business chiefs and local companies he stressed that we need to drive up the level of skills in the local workforce if we are to meet future challenges.

Skills Minister, Lord Young, said:

"These are difficult times but, with a better skilled and qualified workforce we can improve national productivity and sustain the living standards and quality of public services we all want.

"By making the Skills Pledge, companies take a vital step towards getting the best from their employees, ensuring the talents of all are recognised, valued and developed to the full."

One organisation speaking at the event who have already made the Skills Pledge is the Leicestershire based chilled food manufacturing group, Samworth Brothers.

The company has committed to ensuring that its 7000 staff, who work within 13 different operating companies producing such well known brands as Ginsters and Dickinson & Morris, get the training and development they need.

Jo Carver, a Personnel Manager from the company, was among the speakers. She said:

“Making the Skills Pledge was a natural progression for us. It does not mean that we are doing anything differently but it reflects our on-going commitment to training and development. By having a skilled and motivated workforce we maintain a competitive edge.”

Local companies that made the Skills Pledge at the event included LHA-ASRA group, based at Bede Island, Leicester, a leading housing and regeneration agency which works to build better homes and better communities. By making the Skills Pledge the company knows its staff will be better equipped to manage and develop the 12,000 homes it currently provides for renting, shared ownership and residential care across the Midlands, Greater London and the South East.

Steve Walker Associates of North West Leicester, a management and training consultancy, made the Skills Pledge to confirm the help its staff can give to other companies to improve performance.

South Leicestershire College made the Skills Pledge to ensure its staff can provide top quality help and support to the students and companies it works with.

Martin Traynor OBE, Leicestershire Chamber Group Managing Director, said:

“As a Chamber we are fully committed to helping companies of all sizes across Leicester and Leicestershire to grow and develop their businesses, by ensuring they have access to a highly skilled workforce.

“Our city and county is experiencing unprecedented levels of investment, even against the current economic downturn. For our local businesses to take advantage of this investment we all need to upskill our workforce. Signing the Skills Pledge is a public commitment from both the public and private sector to achieve this important goal.”

Tom Crompton, Regional Director for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), said:

“Making the Skills Pledge is essential if firms want to maintain a competitive edge. Companies like the Samworth Brothers, LHA-ASRA and Steve Walker Associates are leading the way and making a commitment to investing in the education and training of their staff.

“By making the Skills Pledge firms also have access to Train to Gain, a skills brokerage service, managed and funded by the 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, put together a training action plan, and then help to find quality assured training providers who can deliver the training they need.”

Notes to Editors:

1. Photographs available. Visit <http://nds.coi.gov.uk> or call Helen Clarke at COI News and PR on 0115 9712787

2. 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.
3. The Skills Pledge is a voluntary commitment by employers to increasing the skills of their workforce for the benefit of the business.
4. For more information about the Skills Pledge visit www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge or call 0800 015 55 45

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