

Sainsbury's Launch Learning Zone for employees

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A 'Learning Zone' for employees has been officially launched by Sainsbury's in their Dunstable Road, Luton store with an Open Day for all Sainsbury's colleagues to take a look at the bite size learning on offer to them.

The Sainsbury's Learning Zone supported with funding through the Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton (LSC) is designed to be open 24 hours so that colleagues can fit in learning around their shift patterns. Short courses on offer are non-vocational and are designed to encourage Sainsbury's colleagues back into learning as well as being an opportunity to de-stress after work. They will range from computing to craft, literacy to languages. A major advantage in providing a Learning Zone on site is that colleagues can do training in their own time before and after work and learn around their shifts at a time that best suits them.

Christine Allen, General Merchandiser and Union Learner Rep at Sainsbury's had experienced some training and wanted to give colleagues the opportunity to learn too. The Learning Zone has been set up with Chris's encouragement to support colleagues with their learning. Commenting on what Chris hopes the centre will

do, she said: "I hope it will take away the fear of learning, and give others confidence through help and encouragement to try something new.

"For me the thought of sending e-mails and surfing the net fills me with dread. I'd like to be able to log on and go, to prove to my grandson I am a 'cool' nanny! I look forward to being given the opportunity to tackle these fears with the bite size courses that will be initially run."

Sainsbury's are proud of their history in supporting colleagues with their learning. In fact their training was so well regarded by their competitors in the early 1900s that they advertised for Sainsbury's trained men. The tradition continues today and Terry Eastcott, Sainsbury's Store Manager, commented: "At Sainsbury's we aspire to be seen as a great place to work and a key part of that is an individual's opportunity to learn and develop to help them grow in the future.

"I hope this centre will breakdown any barriers our diverse workforce may believe exist with this type of learning and allow any of our colleagues to learn in an environment they are used to. The familiar surroundings should give them the confidence to try the courses on offer and in turn encourage their friends and family to look into doing the same.

Terry continued, "We had a number of colleagues enrol on a course last year off site, but only a few completed their course as they found it a struggle to find a balance between learning and their workload. The centre should enable our colleagues to learn at their convenience with courses planned around their shift and without them having to leave the building."

With Sainsbury's it is not just a job but a chance to learn new skills and be part of a great team. With 60% of the Luton store's employees not having English as

their first language, Sainsbury's provides English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) support enabling them to communicate in and out of work.

The Learning and Skills Council Bedfordshire and Luton are pleased to be associated with such a venture. Graham Moores, LSC Director of Economic Development said at the launch: "It is important that employees are supported in their learning as research shows that a more motivated and stress-free staff means improved performance and less sick days so both individuals and the company benefit. The fact that the employees are involved in determining what learning is on offer can only help in ensuring Sainsbury's colleagues take up this great learning opportunity. I hope the bite size courses are the first step to future learning and for them to achieve their full potential."

Luton Borough Council's Adult Community Learning is providing a varied programme of courses. They met with prospective learners on the open day to discuss the level and type of courses best suited to their needs and interests so that a programme of learning activity can be planned. Courses will take place on various days and times during the week so that learning is accessible to all including shift workers.

Lindy Lloyd, ICT Curriculum Leader at Luton Adult Community Learning said: "We are proud to be working in conjunction with the LSC, the trade unions and Sainsbury's to support the creation of a learning zone within their store in Luton. It is an exciting opportunity, enabling us to bring learning into the workplace."

END

Note to Editors:

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LSC

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.

Funding for the Sainsbury's Learning Zone was through the LSC Bedfordshire and Luton's Local Intervention Development Fund (LID).

Sainsbury's

Sainsbury's stands for great products at fair prices. Our objective is simple; to serve customers well. We continually improve and develop our product ranges, and work hard to give customers an ever improving shopping experience. We also aim to fulfill our responsibilities to the communities and environments in which we operate.

For more information on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) go to: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/ImprovingYourSkills/DG_10037499