

PRESS RELEASE

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Thousands of businesses in the East of England offered a helping hand by Train to Gain

A roadshow is touring business centres and industrial parks throughout the region for six weeks starting this week to promote the benefits of training employees to businesses.

The Train to Gain roadshow from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is visiting businesses in Hertfordshire, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire in Train to Gain SMART cars. Its aim is to encourage managers to give their staff appropriate training which will not only aid their personal development but also impact on the success of the business.

Train to Gain is a free and impartial advisory service that helps businesses identify what training they require to improve their business and then helps them find appropriate training providers. By using Train to Gain, companies can also save money on training as the scheme will help with funding for some courses, while all first Level 2 qualifications (equivalent to five good GCSE passes) are free.

Paul Storey, Skills Development Director at the LSC East of England, said: "Many small and medium sized businesses have traditionally been put off training their employees because of the initial costs, but it really can pay dividends, not only on

your bottom line but on morale, staff retention and acquiring and maintaining a competitive edge.

“Train to Gain makes it easier for managers to identify and address any skills shortfalls within their companies. Our locally-based skills brokers will carry out an audit of a business’s training needs before suggesting practical solutions which needn’t be expensive, or even cost the company anything.”

According to the National Audit Office, skills gaps cost a typical 50-employee business £165,000 in lost revenue each year. One in six employers (16%) in England are experiencing skills gaps in their workforce – equivalent to 1.3 million workers - and of that, nearly eight in ten (79%) say it has had an impact on their business*.

Mr Storey said: “Since it was launched in April 2006, nearly 7,000 businesses in the East of England have already opted in to Train to Gain. The roadshow aims to visit thousands of businesses in September and October with the sincere hope that most of these will recognise the benefits the service can offer them and their staff and sign up.”

The retail, health and social care and construction sectors are among the targets in the East of England identified by the LSC as having a greater proportion of training needs and skills gaps that are impacting on their overall success. Other sectors the LSC particularly wishes to reach with its Train to Gain programme include engineering and manufacturing, hospitality and land-based industries.

The roadshow team is travelling the region in Train to Gain SMART cars from Monday, 10 September until Friday, 19 October to carry out pre-arranged appointments with 1,000 businesses and give them information on the service. Hertfordshire is the first

stop in the tour, followed by Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire.

For more information on the Train to Gain scheme, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk or call 0800 387326.

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Notes to Editors

Paul Storey is available for interview. For interview requests and all media enquiries, please contact Susie Lockwood or Kirstie Richardson at Band & Brown Communications on 01603 417722 or email susie.lockwood@bbpr.com or kirstie.richardson@bbpr.com

* from the LSC's National Employer Skills Survey 2005

Train to Gain

1. Train to Gain was launched nationally in September 2006 with the vision that by 2010, young people and adults in England will have the knowledge and skills that match the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce.
2. It is currently being rolled out across the East of England, including Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.
3. The service is administered by The Learning and Skills Council and delivered by The East of England Brokerage Consortium and The Consultancy Home Counties Ltd