

Colchester businesses pass on the Skills Pledge baton to boost workplace learning in Essex

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Three Colchester businesses were among five Essex organisations that passed the Skills Pledge baton onto other local businesses at an event on Friday 11 July at Channels Golf Club. It was all part of a bid to spread the message that workplace learning can have huge benefits for employees and the success of local business.

Kent Blaxill builders' merchants, Every Step training providers and the Colchester Institute all signed up to the Skills Pledge, a Learning and Skills Council (LSC) initiative which encourages businesses to make a public commitment to workplace learning and skills development for their staff.

At Friday's event, they passed the baton on to businesses yet to sign up, in a bid to spread the message that staff development and encouraging learning at work can have a huge impact on the success of the business and local economy. All five businesses received certificates in recognition of the investment made to help employees gain new skills and qualifications to do their jobs and meet the needs of local business.

Now one year old, the Skills Pledge was launched in 2007 by the Learning and Skills Council to encourage employers to make a public and voluntary commitment to actively support employees in learning and developing their skills.

Janice Logie, Area Director for the Learning and Skills Council Essex welcomed the employers and thanked them for making the Skills Pledge which was their public

commitment to actively supporting further the developments of skills for their employees. She challenged them as business leaders to pass on the message about the Skills Pledge and said: "I'd like to ask you all to encourage other businesses to make the same commitment to their staff and the wider business community, as we continue to raise skills and competitiveness across the county."

Lucy Brockway-Smith CEO of Every Step said; "As a training provider successfully delivering Train to Gain to a variety of organisations across the Eastern Region we are very pleased to see a number of companies and providers signing up to the Skills Pledge. We see the Skills Pledge being a significant step forward with companies recognising the benefits of training and learning and investing in their staff to increase their skills. We have seen first hand the direct impact training has had on organisations through efficient working and a greater understanding for subject areas; this has lead to a positive effect on the organisations bottom line."

Linda Cox, Director of Human Resources and Projects at the Colchester Institute added; "Signing up to the Skills Pledge demonstrates a clear commitment to upgrading the skills base and the qualifications base of our employees-at-large. As one of the 10 largest employers in the Colchester area, we hope that others will be following our lead and make a similar statement of intent where staff development and training are concerned."

The race is now on for other organisations in Essex to make this commitment and release the potential within their business as The Skills Pledge baton continues to make its way around the region. One Essex-based business who has already decided to sign-up to the Pledge is FedEx, part the world's largest express transportation company. On July 22 they will be inviting Bill Rammel, Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education to its Stansted Hub to mark their commitment to workforce training and skill development.

Other businesses that attended Friday's event were:

- Port of Tilbury
- Thurrock Council

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For more media information please call Dawn Humphreys or Hannah White at Tribe on 01603 417722 or email hannah@tribepr.com

Notes to editors

Learning and Skills Council:

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.

The Skills Pledge:

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs). The purpose is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the company/organisation.

The Pledge can be given by the Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, owner/manager or other Board member, on behalf of the organisation. It is a corporate commitment covering the whole company/organisation. For those employees who do not already have full Level 2 qualification, the Government will provide funding to help them gain basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as their first full Level 2 qualification. The Skills Pledge is open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sectors.