

PRESS RELEASE

30 December 2009

Take a step towards a new you with the Big Skill – Take a Step campaign

Over a third of people (40%) in Hertfordshire have revealed that they would want to follow in the footsteps of Victoria Beckham, Anton Du Beke and JK Rowling and turn a hobby into a successful career – and they would be willing to learn new skills to help fulfil their dreams.

And, with the New Year traditionally being a time when people set themselves resolutions and challenges, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has launched The Big Skill - Take a Step! campaign to encourage people to take a step towards fulfilling their ambitions by learning a new skill.

Of those people surveyed in the county, 41% said that being given the opportunity to learn a new skill would be the best incentive to encourage them to return to learning. The LSC's campaign aims to show people the opportunities that are available - whether it involves a passion for fashion, dancing, writing or something else entirely.

Jeff Wren, Area Director LSC Hertfordshire, said: "The Take a Step campaign is designed to break down the barriers around learning new skills. We want to remind people that learning can be fun and that there is an enormous sense of achievement from learning something new. Whether you are looking to find work, improve your career, change jobs or simply a fresh challenge, learning new skills is a great way to take steps towards a new you in 2010."

Sandra Crawley from nextstep said: "Here at nextstep we provide people with the confidence to make the right choices and to give them the right information so they can go forwards and take steps towards a new future. We are really looking forward to taking part in The Big Skill - Take a Step! and being able to help people achieve their ambitions - whatever they may be."

The Take a Step campaign builds on The Big Skill Awards which were held last year by the LSC in the east of England, and which were designed to recognise and reward people who had improved their lives, or the lives of others, through learning. The Take a Step campaign will direct those who were inspired by the award-winning stories to the help and support they need to return to learning themselves.

For more information about training opportunities and support available visit the Careers Advice Service (CAS) on line at www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk or call 0800 100 900.

HERTFORDSHIRE CASE STUDY

Samantha Rothwell from Watford has proved that learning a new skill can be a great opportunity following redundancy.

'I would encourage anyone who has been made redundant to look at training as a way forward'

Samantha, 42, found herself redundant from her job in sales and marketing last summer. But when a fellow job seeker told her about IT training available she decided to use this to help boost her career prospects.

"I signed up for Intermediate Excel and Word courses in order to update my skills while I looked for another job," she said. "I knew it was important to keep busy and do something worthwhile as it would look good on my CV if potential employers could see I had used the time to increase my employability."

Samantha completed the free courses at Herts Careers Service in Letchworth, while continuing to look for work. She was lucky enough to find a job after just three months, in sales and marketing, but she plans to continue training through evening classes.

"I found the training really beneficial in terms of meeting people in the same position as myself and being able to share my concerns and hopes with those who knew just how I was feeling. The networking opportunities are tremendous too. I would certainly encourage anyone who has been made redundant to look at training as a way forward," Samantha added.

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*The online survey was conducted by YouGov

Notes to editors

For more media information and images please contact Lucy Clegg or Dawn Humphreys on 01603 417722 or email lucy@tribepr.com

Images:

Please find attached the campaign image: The Big Skill – Take a Step aims to help people step into the right career for them

Also available on request:

- The Big Skill – Take a Step logo
- Photograph of Samantha Rothwell
- Photograph of Jeff Wren, Area Director LSC Hertfordshire

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 Big Skill 2009

The Big Skill first ran in 2008 and following its success in Norfolk was rolled out across all six counties in the East of England, with support from Ray Stubbs.

The Big Skill – Take a Step!

The Big Skill – Take a Step campaign is an extension of The Big Skill designed to build upon the inspirational stories of learning achievement from the awards and signpost those who have been inspired to the help, support, funding and advice available to help them take their own steps towards learning a new skill in 2010.

Jargon buster

A Big Skill – Take a Step! jargon buster, with details of qualification, training provider and learning terminology is available. This may provide additional editorial copy and be useful for a feature.

Please call 01603 417722 if you would like the jargon buster.

Survey

The survey was carried out on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 1054 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 16-24 November 2009. The survey was carried out online.