

Investment in employee skills training is boost for business

Expansion of trailblazing Train to Gain Service offers training for all

Date of issue	28 November 2007
Publication number	LSC-PR-LOR-070028
Embargo until	28 November 2007

The Government has revealed that the Train to Gain scheme will be expanded so that it offers greater flexibility for employers and a bespoke skills brokerage service. Funding for Train to Gain will also be doubled to a £1 billion, part of the £11 billion spent nationally by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on education, employment and training.

The skills brokerage element will be reformed and extended and the service will aim to work with more medium and larger employers in London. New flexibilities will be introduced; Apprenticeships for adults will be funded through Train to Gain and Skills for Life will be available at all levels as a stand alone option. In addition, new ESOL for Work qualifications will be piloted in London and Train to Gain will be extended to include the self employed and voluntary sectors.

Dedicated sector specialists will ensure that the needs of employers are better understood and bureaucracy will be reduced by simplifying funding and commissioning arrangements. Many of these measures will be pioneered in London which needs to make significant strides forward over the next three years in terms of the numbers of people accessing Train to Gain.

Since its launch in 2006, Train to Gain has helped more than 52,000 employers and enabled over 240,000 employees to undertake training. Just one call to the Train to Gain helpline gives employers access to an impartial and independent skills broker to help them identify their skills and other business needs, and source training from a range of available skills solutions to best meet those needs.

To enable every company to access appropriate training, the following major expansion to

the Train to Gain Service has been announced:

- More funding will be offered for a broader range of skills. Part funding will now be available for those doing a second full Level 2 qualification and funding for Level 3 will be increased nationally. Skills for Life training will now be supported as a stand alone offer as well as part of a full Level 2 qualification;
- The funding cap to be lifted for the best providers, enabling them to do more business as their performance improves;
- A massive boost for SME management training – the budget has increased from £4 million per annum to £30 million per annum, which will support some 60,000 key directors and managers in around 42,000 companies over the next three years;
- The LSC's National Employer Service will be expanded, with additional account managers to help more of the country's largest national employers, while skills brokerage will also be extended to help provide even more companies with specialist support;
- By working closely with Jobcentre Plus through their Local Employment Partnerships, Train to Gain will support people who have been unemployed to secure employment with training and progression on to higher level skills;
- New compacts with each Sector Skills Council which will tailor Train to Gain to ensure it meets the skills needs of employers in each sector – and joint investment planning so that public and employer funds work together to boost skills and improve.

Skills Minister David Lammy commented:

“Lord Leitch’s report spoke of a partnership between the state, the employer and the individual. Today, in partnership with the business community and training providers, we set out our plans for the expansion of Train to Gain as a vehicle for creating a truly demand-led further education sector. To this end we have cut bureaucracy to make sure

that those colleges and training organisations that can best meet employers' needs are able to expand to meet demand.

“I am delighted to see that businesses are recognising the importance of skills and they are rising to the challenge by investing more in the skills of their workforce. We've listened to employers to ensure that this extended programme is even more effective in offering training when and where they need it. In particular, the increased investment in developing the leadership and management capacity in our SMEs will build a sense of mission at the heart of our communities, making their companies more profitable”.

David Hughes, LSC London Regional Director added:

“Train to Gain is a revolutionary development in the way that we deliver services to employers and these changes will ensure that even more employers and training providers are able to work with Government to raise the nation's skill levels. The expanded Train to Gain Service will enable employers of all sizes, in all locations and across all sectors to take the future of their business into their hands through access to high quality training advice and support. In this way, it will play a key role in reaching out to the one in three businesses that still do not offer staff any training – and so will in-turn transform the nation's skills base, productivity and competitiveness between now and 2020.”

FM Conway Ltd is a multi-disciplined construction contractor with 700 employees based in London and Kent. It provides a wide range of services including civil engineering, bridges and structures, surfacing and highway maintenance. Sharon Field, a General Manager at FM Conway has used the Train to Gain service to help her get a Level 3 qualification in management. She says:

“Although I had the knowledge, training, experience and ability to manage the SHEQ team, I was acutely aware that I had no formal management qualification.”

“Gaining qualifications has renewed my self-confidence. I’m sure that it will strengthen my ability to support the company in its future growth”

The Fire Brigades Union has been using the Train to Gain service to provide staff with new skills. During the last 25 years, the fire-fighter’s job has changed dramatically. While tackling fires remains at the centre of the role, computer skills have become increasingly important.

Tim Davis, the Union’s learning co-ordinator for the London region said:

“The trouble is, despite years of dabbling on the computers at work, many still don’t feel at all confident in this area because they’ve never received formal IT training. When this sentiment was confirmed by 81 per cent of respondents in a recent learning survey among Brigade staff, I knew we had to take action. I also knew that training the fire fighting teams would not be straightforward because of their complex shift patterns. But then I found out about Train to Gain, got in touch with Kingston College and the ball started rolling.”

Liz Ogilvie, Director of Business Enterprise at Kingston College, is impressed by the commitment shown by the fire-fighters taking part in the training. She said:

“They are very appreciative of the opportunity they have been given to improve their IT skills. From the feedback we’ve had to date, the training is definitely making a difference to their lives and adding value to their work.”

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

Level 2 qualification is equivalent to 5 GCSEs A* - C

More investment in learning and skills:

A major investment programme announced by John Denham on 16th November includes a major expansion of apprenticeships, a right to basis skills training where needed and the provision of over 500,000 full Level 3 adult training places.

Train to Gain:

Train to Gain is a service from the Learning and Skills Council, helping businesses get the training they need to succeed. An important element of the Train to Gain Service is skills brokerage that offers free impartial advice, and helps find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training providers to meet business needs. Train to Gain is important because skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on UK productivity and competitiveness in the face of fast-growing economies. Train to Gain aims to encourage all businesses and individuals to value and realise the benefits that learning and skills can bring and to invest appropriately. It is expected that by the end of 2010, over 500,000 learners will have achieved a first full Level 2 qualification through Train to Gain.

To find out more about how Train to Gain can help, employers should call **0800 015 55 45** or visit **traintogain.gov.uk**. Alternatively, individuals and employers can access the information they need on skills via a dedicated phone line and website. The phone number is 0800 011 30 30 or website: www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Its 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. It works nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

www.lsc.gov.uk/london

Media Enquiries

For further information please contact:

Emily Towers
Learning and Skills Council
020 7904 0784
Emily.towers@lsc.gov.uk

Lynn McSweeney
Learning and Skills Council
020 7904 0663
07810757172
Lynn.McSweeney@lsc.gov.uk