

Pledge to improve skills of thousands of South Londoners **Four Local Authorities in South London pledge to train staff**

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Four Local Authorities in South London **have pledged to invest in training their staff today at an event attended by** Skills Minister David Lammy and Learning and Skills Council Area Director, Vic Grimes.

Representatives from Croydon, Kingston and Merton signed the Skills Pledge, a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of a company or organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills. The purpose is to ensure that all staff are fully trained and able to make a full contribution to the success of the organisation. The event was also attended by Sutton Council, who were one of the first local authorities to sign up to the Skills Pledge in June 2007.

The event, which took place at Millbank Tower in London, saw representatives of the local authorities commit to support all their employees to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills and work towards a full Level 2 qualification equivalent to five GCSEs A* to C.

In addition, a joint working agreement between the local authorities and the LSC was formally launched. The agreement, which was initiated in September 2007, sees the appointment of a Train to Gain Account Manager to each of the Local Authorities. The Account Manager is currently working with the Human Resources and Learning Development departments at the Local authority to identify skills needs within the organisation and to source training solutions.

In order to make the planning and delivery more manageable the programme is being piloted in selected departments, ranging from schools to waste management, before being rolled out across the organisation. A steering group has been formed to give the Local Authorities the opportunity to share best practise in delivering the Skills Pledge across their organisations.

Skills Minister David Lammy said:

“It is crucial that government and employers join forces to provide people with the skills needed to improve their future job prospects and make sure that London remains a world class economic leader. That is why I am pleased to see that three of the local authorities in South London are making the pledge today and leading the way.”

Vic Grimes, LSC Area Director for London South said:

“As the demand for unskilled jobs continues to decrease it is crucial that the government and employers ensure that people receive the skills training they need to be able to compete for jobs in the future. As some of the largest employers in London, local authorities have a responsibility to ensure that their staff are equipped with the skills they need to become more productive, making the organisation more effective now and in the future.”

Will Tuckley, Deputy Chief Executive, Croydon Council, said:

“Our employees are the council’s most important resource and we have always put great emphasis on learning and development. By working alongside the LSC we will continue to support our employees to achieve their ambitions and empower them to provide excellent services to the people of Croydon, so we can increase residents’ satisfaction with the council.”

Bruce McDonald, Chief Executive, Kingston Council, said:

“Kingston Council is pleased to be part of an initiative that provides staff with the opportunity to develop their basic skills at a pace that suits them.

“All employers have a duty to provide their staff with the opportunity and support they need to develop their personal and professional skills. Kingston Council is working closely with the Learning and Skills Council to identify and address training needs that fall within *Train to Gain* funding, in Housing, Schools and Environmental Services. Signs so far are extremely positive.”

Ged Curran, Chief Executive, London Borough of Merton said:

“Merton are delighted to sign the Learning and Skills Council Skills Pledge. We know how vital it is for our staff to develop to their full potential and we want to do everything we can to ensure we are supporting that. Merton is always trying to be fitter, faster and more focused as an organisation to enable the best value and service for our residents and so this programme is just another step in the right direction.”

Sue Higgins, Sutton’s Strategic Director for Resources and the council’s Skills Champion, said:

“Sutton has always put great emphasis on the training and development of its staff and Skills for Life gives us the opportunity to help our workforce improve their essential skills still further. Since we signed up to the Skills Pledge last year employees in waste management have successfully completed the first training course. The council and the trade unions have worked together to develop this ongoing programme which staff have shown great enthusiasm for.”

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Notes to Editors

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

What is the Skills Pledge?

An initiative launched by the government in 2007, 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 a 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.

For more information visit: <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge/>

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