

7th November 2008

Dear Train to Gain Skills Broker, College and Training Provider

Further to my recent letter, I am writing to provide you with further information on the most recent changes to Train to Gain.

Marketing Campaign

Ministers have agreed a new marketing and communications campaign, including TV and radio adverts to raise employer, particularly smaller business who are the focus of £350 million of Government funds, awareness and understanding of the support that is available through Train to Gain to help them train their staff.

From 10th November, peak-time television and radio adverts will remind employers of the importance of training in an economic downturn. The adverts will emphasise that it is easier and quicker for small and medium-sized businesses to get advice and funding for the skills their business needs.

We anticipate that the adverts will elicit a good response from businesses, especially smaller ones who will have seen the recent media coverage on changes to the support available to them. It will be important that we work together to ensure that we are able to meet the high expectations set by the campaign.

Train to Gain offer

Earlier this year, the support available through Train to Gain to all businesses was significantly enhanced and a range of new flexibilities were made available including: an expansion in the leadership and management offer; opening up support for literacy and numeracy; and supporting some additional Level 2s and 3s as defined by Sector Skills Councils through their sector compacts. Each of the ten compacts agreed to date have further enhanced the support available through Train to Gain so that it meets the specific needs of employers in that sector.

We also streamlined business processes, reduced bureaucracy, rebalanced the higher and lower rates threshold, and increased the overall funding rates. These changes improved the experience for skills brokers, colleges and training providers – allowing you to focus your resources on meeting employer and learner needs.

The Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills recently announced a number of further additions to the package of support available to smaller, private sector businesses. The additions include: shorter training packages in defined circumstances designed to have a more immediate impact on business needs; extending the support available for leadership and management to businesses with between 5 and 10 employees; and more funding for Level 2s and 3s where the individual has a prior qualification at that level.

Support through Train to Gain for people who are unemployed or facing redundancy

In addition, the Secretary of State, along with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, recently announced a £100m cash boost to help reskill unemployed people in England to help them move quickly back to work. This will draw on European Social Funding as well as some Train to Gain funds.

Drawing on our work on integrating employment and skills, including the now well-established Local Employment Partnerships, we will develop the range of support available to people who have recently been made redundant, or those facing redundancy, and their employers. This will include more funding for shorter training packages to help people get into jobs. Again, there will be some relaxation of rules around “firstness” and “fullness”

Simplification and strategic skills

You will also have seen two important announcements made on 24th October which will help shape Train to Gain going forward. The first was John Denham’s CBI speech on strategic skills, which highlighted the importance of a more coherent approach to supporting major projects like the Olympics and Crossrail and also supporting sectors as we are doing through sector compacts.

The second was by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, which announced a major package of proposals for ensuring Train to Gain and skills brokerage helped with the simplification of the skills offer from the employer point of view.

We are working with colleagues in Government to ensure both these themes are reflected in ongoing development of Train to Gain.

Briefings

At the end of November, briefings in each region will provide an opportunity to discuss the latest changes to the package of support for smaller businesses as well as the pre-employment offer and support for individuals facing redundancy, and to better understand the operational issues arising from these changes.

The funding and audit guidance for the 08/09 academic year will be updated and re-issued in December. We will work closely with AoC and ALP as we develop the

guidance to ensure that the whole system is geared up to effectively introduce the changes from January 2009.

We would ask you to urgently brief your front-line staff so that they are fully aware of the marketing campaign, and of the full range of support now available through Train to Gain. We want businesses to experience a high quality and responsive service. Your staff will play an important role in informing smaller businesses of the changes – and keeping them engaged in Train to Gain, ready for when the new changes are introduced in January 2009.

To support your front-line staff briefings, I have attached a note which provides detail of the entire Train to Gain offer. Campaign materials will be available on the skills broker website, the Train to Gain page on the LSC's website, and on the Business Link website from Monday.

In Summary

Now more than ever we can say that Train to Gain provides businesses - of all sizes and in all sectors – with the widest range of Government supported advice and training designed to help them upskill and qualify their workforce and to improve the performance of their business.

Skills brokers, colleges and training providers play a vital role in ensuring that even more employers hear about Train to Gain and the support that is available to support them through the changing economic situation.

I know that you will agree that these flexibilities and additions represent a further significant step change in Train to Gain and demonstrate how the service remains relevant to the changing needs of employers, learners and local communities.

Yours sincerely



Mark Haysom CBE
Chief Executive