

Government launches £10 million apprenticeship expansion

Date of issue: 01/12/08

Press release number: 571

The Government has today reaffirmed its commitment to developing the nation's skills, with the launch of an innovative new trial to develop Apprenticeship Expansion Programmes aimed at increasing current Apprenticeship numbers to fill existing skills gaps. The trials, delivered through the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) will provide participating employers with access to funds of more than £10 million over the next three years, in a bid to increase the number of available Apprenticeship vacancies.

The Apprenticeship Expansion Programme trials will provide extra funding to employers who are currently running high quality Apprenticeships. It aims to develop and test models which will allow employers to recruit and train additional apprentices. The trials will help the apprentices secure employment with employers in the supply chain or elsewhere in the wider sector. This expansion will not only serve to meet the current high demand for Apprenticeship positions, but also prove a key factor in meeting the Government's target of ensuring 400,000 apprentices in England by 2020.

The new funding is available to large businesses and groups of small and medium sized businesses who have a track record of delivering high quality Apprenticeship programmes. Financial support will be available to meet the additional costs associated with the trials such as the wage, training and management costs of learners. Having almost trebled the number of young people and adults starting high quality Apprenticeships, the Learning and Skills

Council plans to build on this success by working collaboratively with employers to deliver Apprenticeships in a more innovative and flexible manner.

Commenting on the new trial David Way, National Director of Apprenticeships at the LSC said: "Given the current economic slowdown it is important that companies continue training their staff to maintain productivity and a competitive edge. Employing apprentices is an ideal way for businesses to position themselves as leaders for the recovery. The new funding will make it easier for businesses to do this and provide the opportunity for industry sectors to successfully fill their existing skills gaps."

Businesses that are keen to take part in the trial should express their interest and contact the Learning and Skills Council by calling 024 7682 3668 or visiting www.lsc.gov.uk
The deadline for expressions of interest is 16 January 2009.

Notes to Editors

Apprenticeships

More than 130,000 employers currently hire apprentices and there has been a three-fold increase in the last decade in the numbers available. There are more than 180 types of apprenticeship available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce

A new dedicated National Apprenticeship Service will launch in April 2009, designed to ensure that Apprenticeships become a mainstream option for 16-18 year olds, with around one in five of all young people undertaking an apprenticeship within the next decade. The service also ensures that action is taken to boost the supply of apprenticeship opportunities, through a more flexible and responsive model for apprenticeship frameworks, incentive payments to targeted businesses,

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.

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