

EMPLOYER TRAINING SPEND HITS RECORD HIGH AT £38BN

Workforce spends 218 million days training

Extra 77,000 businesses commit to training

Train to Gain service helping businesses see the benefits of training

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Companies have spent an all time high of £38.6 billion on training, up 16 per cent from 2005, according to findings from the National Employer Skills Survey 2007 (NESS07), released today by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This accounts for an increase in real terms of £3.5 billion after inflation. The research shows that the proportion of vacancies that can't be filled due to a skills shortage has dropped from 25 per cent in 2005, to 21 per cent in 2007 and affects 5 per cent of employers.

NESS07, which spoke to over 79,000 employers and provides the most comprehensive analysis of skills in England, reveals a nation more committed to training than ever before. It is clear that there is awareness of the benefits of a better skilled society – especially in the face of rising competition from international countries – as employers are committing more money and time towards training.

Last year, over two thirds (67 per cent) of the country's businesses spent a combined total of 218 million days training their workforces. The average money spent per employee on training increased by 11 per cent from £1,550 in 2005 to £1,750 in 2007.

At the same time there has been a rise in take-up of the Government's flagship service, Train to Gain. Train to Gain has already helped more than 78,000 employers. Launched nationally in August 2006, Train to Gain is a skills advice and support service that gives employers access to the right training to help their business succeed. Evaluation of the service, surveying almost 4,000 employers involved with Train to Gain, has found that 80 per cent of employers and 77 per cent of employees have been satisfied with the advice and training received. Furthermore, over three quarters (77 per cent) of employers questioned would be likely or very likely to use the service

again and eight in ten (80 per cent) would recommend the service to a colleague outside of their organisation.

The evaluation research also highlights the clear benefits of the training received through Train to Gain. Three quarters (74 per cent) of employers using the service reported an improvement in their employees' job-related skills while four fifths (80 per cent) of learners who had received a qualification through Train to Gain reported that they had gained skills to help them do a better job in the future.

Secretary of State, Rt Hon John Denham (MP) commented: "The need to improve the nation's skills is a key priority for the Government as we face increasing competition from across the globe. It is vital for everyone - businesses, employees and Government - to work together to ensure we have the skills we need to succeed. It is very encouraging to see that 77,000 more companies trained their staff last year and I urge all businesses, regardless of size or sector, to follow their lead and invest in training."

Chris Banks, Chairman of the Learning and Skills Council said: "These findings are extremely encouraging. Never before have so many employers invested so much in staff training their workforce. Employers are clearly seeing that training is helping to shape the future of their businesses and is the solution to their skills needs. The challenge now is to encourage more employers to invest in their staff in this way, so that we can close the skills gap further.

"It is also clear that employers need more advice and support about how to spend their training budgets more effectively. That's where Train to Gain can help. It provides employers with a wide range of skills support from advice on how to make the Skills Pledge through to taking on an apprentice. Through Train to Gain, businesses can receive the help they need so they can reap the full benefits of their investment in training their workforce."

Train to Gain has also been instrumental in reaching those parts of the workforce that are often not able to access training with higher than average take up from black and ethnic minority groups and workers aged over 46 (12 per cent and 31 per cent respectively).

For more information on Train to Gain call 0800 015 55 45 or visit traintogain.gov.uk

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Media Enquiries

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Notes to editors

NESS07

NESS07 is commissioned by the LSC, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) to provide information on the extent, causes and implications of recruitment, skills gaps and training in England. Also conducted in 2003, 2004 and 2005, the report is able to show the changing pattern of skills demanded by employers.

The full report will be available on lsc.gov.uk from Wednesday 7 May 2008.

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.

Train to Gain

Managed by the Learning and Skills Council, Train to Gain is the government's flagship service to support employers in England, of all sizes and in all sectors, to improve the skills of their employees, unlock talent and drive improved business performance. An important element of Train to Gain is the skills brokerage service which 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: lsc.gov.uk/inourhands