

New Learning Centre for Employees

Date of issue 27th November 2006
Publication number LSC0607-046
Embargo until For immediate release

Hundreds of employees at a Darlington Distribution Centre are benefiting from a new learning centre to help them learn, gain qualifications and encourage a learning culture in the workplace.

Up to 600 employees at the Argos Distribution site on the town's Faverdale Estate could potentially benefit from the learning opportunities that will be on offer in the new centre. Employees including fork lift truck drivers, warehouse staff and administration staff will be able to take advantage of formal NVQ Level 2 and literacy and numeracy qualifications plus language courses, internet access and learning aimed at personal development.

The centre has been established thanks to a successful application to the TUC Northern Learning for All Fund, which is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), One NorthEast and the TUC. Argos provided a room for the learning centre, broadband Internet connection and workstations. The fund provided the learning centre with 10 wireless laptop computers and printer.

Tom Crompton, Director of the LSC in the south of the region, officially opened the learning centre today (Monday, 27th November). He said: "I am delighted that so many employees from one company will now have the opportunity to access a wide range of learning opportunities from their workplace. This new centre will not only enable staff to access job specific learning, including Level 2 and skills for life qualifications to enable them to perform better in the workplace, but it will also encourage individuals to take advantage of personal development by becoming involved in a culture of learning. The LSC is committed to working with employers to raise skill levels in the region and this is just the kind of partnership initiative that is helping us achieve that aim."

Christine Ebdon, the site HR Manager said: “The learning centre has come about following clear indications from the colleagues themselves that they obviously want to be involved in learning and better themselves. Basic literacy and numeracy – skills for life – and languages are high on the agenda although it became apparent the employees wanted to access a whole range of learning opportunities. It has taken a year to get this project off the ground and I am delighted that we are now able to roll out this project which will enhance the skills of our employees.”

Barney McGill from unionlearn with the Northern TUC, said: “Establishing a workplace learning centre demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring both equality of opportunity and development for the workforce, from both the unions and employers involved. Centres such as this have a proven track record in achieving positive results for those who use it, and wider-reaching benefits for the region as a whole due to improved standards and a higher skilled workforce for the region.”

Paul Clark a Union Learning Organiser for the Transport and General Workers’ Union, said: “I am absolutely delighted that we are now in the position to officially open this learning centre. There will be a fantastic opportunity for the network of trained Union Learning Representatives to engage with the workforce and provide information and give advice on the learning opportunities that are available through the learning centre. The Learning for All Fund has yet again contributed to raising the skill level within another workplace. I am also confident that our own NE Logistics CoVE will provide an excellent service in delivering high quality training to this company.”

Martyn Warwick a Lifelong Learning Project Worker for USDAW, the Shop Workers’ Union, added: “It important to emphasise the partnership and inclusive elements of this project, which has only got off the ground because of a supportive employer working in partnership with the sites two trade unions and underpinned by a united and dedicated team of union learning reps from Usdaw and the T&G, including two Polish learning reps. Hopefully by tackling Skills for life and ESOL, looking at IT and other recreational courses

as well as supporting vocational learning we can build on this encouraging start and all staff will embrace a learning culture at the site"

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational 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 by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

Unionlearn is the TUC's learning and skills organisation.

With over 800,000 members in every type of workplace, the Transport & General Workers' Union is the UK's biggest general union and has a long and proud tradition of representing members in the workplace.

Usdaw is one of Britain's largest trade unions with over 340,000 members nationwide.

Media contact:

Ann Barnes and Laura Tiplady, Regional Press Officers, t: 0191 492 6355

E-mail: pressofficenortheast@lsc.gov.uk

Out of hours media contact Julie Calvert, Regional Marketing and Communications Manager at the LSC North East: T: 07710075118