

THE GIFT WHICH KEEPS ON GIVING THROUGHOUT LIFE **Vouchers for training courses available as 'Perfect Gifts' for the first time**

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The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has launched a new and unique scheme that enables people to buy Gift Vouchers towards the cost of Further Education (FE) courses for the first time.

The pilot project, launched this week in nine colleges across England including Blackpool and The Fylde College, will promote FE courses as 'the Perfect Gift' for people to give to friends and family, to help loved ones learn brand new skills. The trial comes as new research reveals that over half (56%) of people would like to receive a Gift Voucher for a training course as a present.

The ICM research, commissioned by DIUS, also showed that receiving a Voucher for a course was the second most popular gift people in the North West of England would like to receive (25%) after clothes (33%) but ahead of books (19%), music (12%) and toiletries (7%) in a list of five possible gifts.

Launching the pilot, David Lammy, Minister for Skills said: "The Perfect Gift pilot is a superb example of the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit that runs through the FE sector. Enabling people to purchase Vouchers for courses is a simple but effective way to make learning, and the benefits of learning, even more accessible to everyone."

The Gift Vouchers can be used to enrol on a variety of courses available at participating colleges and are redeemable during the 2007-2008 academic year. Each Gift Voucher has a value of £50 and may cover the full course cost or a contribution towards it.

In addition to Blackpool & The Fylde College, DIUS and the LSC are working with Chichester College, New College Nottingham, College of North East London, Gateshead College, York College, West Hertfordshire College, Filton College (Bristol) and Warwickshire College.

Ian Haworth, Director of Area for the LSC in Lancashire said of the scheme: "This is the ideal gift for a friend or family member whom you know is keen to develop a hobby, learn a new skill or even update existing skills. This innovative project presents an exciting opportunity and I am certain it will appeal to a wide range of people."

Linda Siegle, Joint Chief Executive of the Campaign for Learning, commented: "This is an excellent initiative which supports our own objectives of encouraging family members to help loved ones in developing their skills through engaging in learning. We believe this straightforward yet effective idea will prove extremely popular and we look forward to hearing how the initiative develops."

Other findings from the research revealed a little more about people's spending habits when it comes to gifts:

- People in the North West of England would most like to receive a training course as a gift (25%)
- The average amount people usually spend on gifts for close family members is £75
- 50% of people in the North West of England consider a training course as a worthwhile investment

Ends

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Notes to editors:

Data: ICM Omnibus Research: carried out by telephone by ICM Research. Fieldwork 9-15 March 2007. Results based on 1,726 interviews in England.

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.

Gift Voucher:

Purchase terms and conditions

- People can purchase a voucher by visiting or calling participating colleges
- The voucher can be paid for using debit, credit cards or cheques
- When the voucher is purchased over the phone it will be sent via a secured postal service
- Upon delivery, the recipient must give immediate written notice of any damage, defect or shortage.
- The recipient may not reproduce in any form the voucher, and/or the trade marks or anything deceptively similar to it, or authorise assist or enable others to do so.
- The voucher cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or coupon and is not refundable.
- Redemption Terms are detailed on the voucher.

Redemption terms and conditions

- The voucher may be used to pay for the full cost of a course or a contribution towards it at the following course providers; Blackpool and The Fylde College, Chichester College, New College Nottingham, College of North East London, Gateshead College, York College, West Hertfordshire College, Filton College (Bristol) and Warwickshire College
- The voucher can be redeemed by visiting the participating course providers.
- The voucher cannot be redeemed online.
- The voucher can only be used towards courses stipulated by each participating course provider.
- The voucher can only be redeemed once and by one individual.
- No cash alternative is available.
- Photocopies will not be accepted.
- You must not reproduce in any form the voucher, and/or the trade marks or anything deceptively similar to it, or authorise assist or enable others to do so.
- The voucher cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer or coupon and is not transferable.
- The voucher is not replaceable if lost, stolen, destroyed or expired.
- Enrolment on a selected course is subject to availability and places cannot be guaranteed.
- The voucher can be redeemed between October 16th 2007 and the end of the academic year 2008.
- The voucher will be retained.
- The voucher is not refundable.