

SKILLS BOOST FOR CHESHIRE BUSINESSES

Cheshire businesses are turning to training to boost productivity as the economic downturn bites.

Almost a quarter of a million employees in the North West are now benefiting from their employers' commitment to training, according to new research from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Across the region 875 employers have made the Skills Pledge on behalf of their staff.

The Skills Pledge is a public commitment made by an employer to increasing the skills of their workforce. It is a promise that, through training, they'll work to boost the productivity of their business or organisation and realise the potential of their employees. Investing in the skills of the workforce can improve performance, motivate employees and increase staff retention. As the economic climate toughens more businesses across the region are recognising that training could be the key to business success.

Lynton Lasers, based in Holmes Chapel, specialises in the design and manufacture of laser and lighting systems for the medical aesthetics industry. They decided to make the Skills Pledge to confirm their belief in developing their staff through training.

Sue Weighell, Finance Director at Lynton Lasers, said: "Making the Skills Pledge has provided a way for us to commit to future development and is something I would advocate to other employers. Learning new skills and enhancing existing abilities can only help your company to progress in a positive manner."

Dave Brennan, Acting Director of Skills at the LSC in the North West said: "It's great news that so many organisations within the region are making the commitment to train and invest in their employees. The Skills Pledge is a vital tool in improving the skill level of our region's workforce, and helping us reach our goal of developing these skills to world-class levels."

Chris Banks, Chairman of the LSC, said: "As a businessman myself, I know how hard it can be to look beyond the day-to-day worries of the current economic climate. But one thing I know will help organisations weather the storm is a strategic investment in training. "Without doubt, better skills result in more efficient and more effective businesses. With this in mind, we are calling on organisations across the country to take the first step and make the Skills Pledge – helping to train staff so they're more versatile which in return will improve a company's resilience."

The Government wants more businesses to make the Skills Pledge and shape a better future for their workers, their company and for the nation. Employers who make the Skills Pledge can access support for their training needs through the Government's flagship Train to Gain service.

Train to Gain is funded by the LSC and offers free, impartial advice, support and funding to help companies of all sizes train and develop their employees. Skills Secretary John Denham recently unveiled a new, more flexible Train to Gain package specifically aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).