

## **Lancashire businesses benefit from extra training support**

Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) join forces to host business briefing in Preston

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The British Chambers of Commerce has joined forces with the LSC in the North West to host a business briefing for local employers to discuss the economic challenges and the help available.

The meeting, which took place at Preston North End on Wednesday 4 February was an opportunity for employers to find out how they could benefit from significant enhancements made to the Government's flagship training service, Train to Gain, designed specifically to help smaller businesses through the current economic climate.

Commenting on the event Skills Minister Lord Young, said:

"Facing a global economic slowdown, now is not the time to cut back on skills and training. It's not just Government that's saying it – the CBI, TUC, UK Commission for Employment and Skills and leading employers support the view. We know that companies that don't invest in training are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those that do.

"That's why we are giving businesses and individuals access to real help now. We are reshaping the training system to make sure businesses can get help with training their staff with the minimum of bureaucracy. We have made Train to Gain more flexible to help businesses with 250 employees or fewer get through the tougher economic climate by building the skills and expertise of their staff. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) can now access funding for training for subjects such as business improvement techniques or leadership and management which are proven to provide skills to increase

their productivity. We're also making SMEs top priority for Train to Gain funds including the £350 million growth over the next two years.

"The Government is making an unprecedented investment in adult training and in January we announced £83 million to offer 75,000 college training places to people who have been out of work for more than six months. We're supporting colleges to work more effectively with firms to develop skills that really meet the demands of employers large and small. We will continue to invest in apprenticeships with an extra £140 million this year which will see over a quarter of a million young people and adults benefit from the opportunities that an apprenticeship offers."

David Frost, Director General, at the British Chamber of Commerce, said: 'It is critical that small businesses ensure they have the skills they need in place to see them through these very difficult times. Staff need highly transferable skills which will not only benefit business but also the employee, enabling both to see through the tough times and emerge in the best possible position to drive their businesses forward. These events offer a great chance for businesses to find out more about the help available to them.'

The latest Train to Gain flexibilities, which were announced in October 2008, allow small and medium sized businesses access to help train staff to get them through the challenging times and prepare for the upturn through a more flexible training package.

The measures include fully funded and part-funded bite-size training courses in areas that make quick returns to a business, whether in cash flow management or business improvement techniques. Train to Gain's leadership and management programme was also extended so that businesses with between five and 250 employees can access up to £1,000 in funding in areas such as coaching and mentoring or working towards a qualification.

Businesses can also equip staff with a range of skills at different levels with the announcement of fully funded Level 2 qualifications – the equivalent of five good

GCSEs – and subsidised Level 3 – the equivalent of two A-level passes – regardless of whether the employee already has a qualification at this level.

For more information on Train to Gain call 0800 015 55 45 or visit [traintogain.gov.uk](http://traintogain.gov.uk)

## **ENDS**

### **Media Enquiries**

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### **Notes to editors**

#### **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. A key element of Train to Gain are skills brokers who offers employers impartial advice and at no cost, helping them find the best training solution from high quality and responsive training.

To help ensure that the Train to Gain offer meets the needs of every sector, DIUS has developed 'sector skills compacts' with employers in key sectors of our economy which tailor the Train to Gain offer to their specific needs and circumstances. Compacts have already been agreed with Sector Skills Councils for 10 sectors, including Semta, ConstructionSkills, People 1st, Proskills and Skills for Justice, together worth some £440m over three years.

Train to Gain has supported over 570,000 learners to begin their learning programmes. Over 254,000 learners have achieved a full level 2 qualification. Over 16,000 learners have full level 3 achievements.

To find out more about how Train to Gain can help, employers should call 0800 015 55 45 or visit [traintogain.gov.uk](http://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](http://lsc.gov.uk/inourhands)

**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.

**Sector Skills Compacts**

Sector compacts are non-contractual agreements between the DIUS, the LSC and SSC's. Compacts provide additional resource to work with the LSC and the Train to Gain service to encourage employers to take advantage of Apprenticeships and the Train to Gain offer and make the Skills Pledge. To date, compacts have been announced with the construction, engineering manufacture, hospitality, process, science and technology and justice sectors. For more information see: <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/tg/latest/>