

Stakeholder Newsletter



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A plan for growth



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Funds to help management sharpen skills



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In recent months, over 680 companies have taken advantage of funding to help offset the cost of leadership and management development. [Read more >](#)

South West NHS leads UK with commitment to skills training



The South West has become the first region in the UK to have all of its NHS Trusts make the Government's Skills Pledge, a commitment made by heads of organisations to train their staff and ensure they have the skills needed to compete on a regional and national basis.

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A plan for growth



Following the significant expansion and improvement of the Train to Gain service announced by John Denham, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Ministers have agreed a number of new flexibilities to enhance the delivery of the Train to Gain service. These additional flexibilities will build on those announced in the *Plan for Growth* last November.

The new changes represent a further significant improvement to Train to Gain. They will support the rapid expansion of the service, confirming its major role in delivering the Government's skills strategy and ambitions described in *World Class Skills* – the Government's response to the Lord Leitch report.

By 2010/11 more than £1bn of public funding will be routed through Train to Gain and the service will support in excess of 950,000 employees each year.

The proposed changes will ensure employers have the widest possible range of support to upskill and qualify their workforce to improve the performance of their business. They will also give colleges and training providers more freedom to respond to employer demand.

'This is excellent news for the LSC,' said Mark Haysom, the LSC's Chief Executive. 'It endorses the success of Train to Gain which, since its launch in 2006, has helped more than 80,000 employers and enabled over 450,000 employees to undertake training.'

With about 80% of employers engaged having fewer than 50 employees, small and medium companies have already been one of the main beneficiaries of Train to Gain

Chris Minett, LSC South West Development Director for Train to Gain, emphasised the plan's implementation stage.

'We now have detailed plans through to 2011 which highlight the key priorities and make clear the new flexibilities for all involved,' she said.

With about 80% of employers engaged having fewer than 50 employees, small and medium companies have already been one of the main beneficiaries of Train to Gain. Additional investment of £90m over the next three years in the leadership skills of owner-managers will serve to reinforce those benefits.

The *Plan for Growth* will see Skills Brokerage reformed and extended and the creation of greater sector specialist expertise. With work already underway to engage the smallest 'hard to reach' companies, the focus will move to working with medium and large companies.



A plan for growth

continued.

Fact File

- Making Skills for Life qualifications a free standing option. We will support and fund Skills for Life qualifications at all levels as well as part of a full Level 2 qualification.
- Employees with higher levels of prior qualifications who have a literacy or numeracy need will be able to access Skills for Life support through Train to Gain. This is consistent with our wider approach to Skills for Life and supports the delivery of the PSA.
- Funding for Level 3 will be increased nationally.
- Removing the funding cap for the best providers will allow them to do more business as their performance improves.
- The SME leadership and management training budget has increased from £4 million to £30 million per annum, supporting some 60,000 key directors and managers in around 42,000 companies over the next three years.
- The LSC's National Employer Service will be expanded by appointing additional account managers to help more of the country's largest national employers and by extending skills brokerage to help provide even more companies with specialist support.
- Closer working with Jobcentre Plus through their Local Employment Partnerships (LEP) will help people who are unemployed to secure employment with training and progression on to higher level skills.
- Second Level 2s will be offered free of tuition fees to learners recruited through LEPs.
- By establishing new compacts with each Sector Skills Council, Train to Gain will be tailored to ensure it meets employers' specific skills needs and joint investment will be planned so that public and employer funds work together to boost skills and improve.
- We will support a proportion of 'additional Level 2 and 3 qualifications through these compacts plus a proportion of 'additional' full Level 2s in relation to qualifications that are identified as priorities in Sector Qualification Strategies.
- We can now offer support for volunteers and the self employed (from January 2008), and offenders nearing the end of their sentence (from August 2008).

For further details about Plan for Growth, visit www.traintogain.gov.uk

The Skills Pledge and Local Employer Partnerships

The Skills Pledge was launched in June last year and employers who make it are committing themselves to encouraging and supporting the training of all their employees to train to at least a Level 2 and hopefully beyond.

Alongside the Skills Pledge are Local Employment Partnerships (LEPs). Announced by Gordon Brown in the 2007 Budget statement, they are aimed at supporting a UK-wide programme to get people back to work and away from benefits. The initiative targets people who are long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities, people with long-term health conditions and people who have few qualifications.

Jobcentre Plus will work with employers to help them recognise the benefit of offering vacancies to these groups.

Funding through Skills for Jobs and Train to Gain will be available to support pre-employability training and progression routes once the learner is in employment.

For more information or to make the Skills Pledge, please visit www.lsc.gov.uk/skillspledge



South West NHS leads UK with commitment to skills training



'The NHS in the South West has made a very open and demonstrable commitment to supporting its employees to gain the skills and qualifications required to ensure the high level of health services delivery in the region is maintained.'

The South West has become the first region in the UK to have all of its NHS Trusts make the Government's Skills Pledge, a commitment made by heads of organisations to train their staff and ensure they have the skills needed to compete on a regional and national basis.

In making the pledge, all 41 of the NHS Trusts have publicly signalled a commitment to enhance the level of health care services in the region by actively encouraging and supporting its employees develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy.

With Government support, the Trusts will help employees work towards valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (five GCSEs A*-C or equivalent) as well as relevant higher level skills.

The undertaking forms part of a new Joint Investment Framework (JIF) partnership between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the NHS South West Strategic Health Authority and Skills for Health (SfH). The partnership will develop skills, learning and qualifications among NHS employees.

Malcolm Gillespie, South West Regional Director at the LSC, said: "The NHS in the South West has made a very open and demonstrable commitment to supporting its employees to gain the skills and qualifications required to ensure the high level of health services delivery in the region is maintained.

"If organisations are to remain competitive, they need to follow the example set by the NHS. We are aiming to ensure as many people as possible have access to gaining new skills and training relevant to their job. Services such as Train to Gain, which offers free advice to businesses and helps arrange training, will enable the South West's employers achieve this goal and bring a host of benefits to the business too."

Overseeing a total population of more than five million, the NHS South West is both the largest employer and the largest health service region in England. NHS Chief Executive Sir Ian Carruthers said the partnership will equip staff with the skill set required to ensure the NHS continues to deliver a world-class level of service.

"Our decision to make the Skills Pledge underlines our commitment to improving the skills of people working for the NHS in the region. It shows we are focused on developing a flexible workforce which provides an unrivalled level of healthcare service in the South West."

Jonathan Evans of the SfH, which helps to develop solutions in the delivery of skills in the health sector, said: "The drive to improve the skills and competencies of the region's health sector workforce is essential. The framework involving the NHS, the LSC and Skills for Health is a huge step forward in the provision of sustained skills training opportunities."

The JIF will also be focused on funding the skills development and qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4, Apprenticeships and Skills for Life. Compared to this time last year, 31,000 more 19-year-olds have achieved a Level 2 qualification and 18,000 more have achieved a Level 3 (2 A-levels or equivalent).

Over the last decade, Apprenticeship places have also risen from 75,000 to nearly 240,000, with more than 42,000 young people at 13,000 companies currently on work-based training programmes in the South West.

Tulip employees are blossoming



After making the Skills Pledge, staff at food processing company Tulip are blossoming. All 2,000 employees on the Bugle, Bodmin and Redruth sites will be trained in food and drink manufacturing to NVQ Level 2 standard.

'We are delighted to be recognised for our commitment to training as we firmly believe in allowing all of our staff the chance to develop their skills and gain qualifications,' said Christine Powell, Tulip's Divisional Human Relations Manager. 'Some of our staff left school without any qualifications and never thought they would gain any in the workplace, but now they are very enthusiastic about their new skills and the training provided.'

Tulip has teamed up with Cornwall College Business and brokerage service Train to Gain, to provide their new training scheme.

Cornwall College Principal John Latham said: 'Our commitment through CCB is really to help local businesses develop skills to grow and prosper. This is achieved through high-quality training and giving employees the confidence and knowledge to perform well.'

Team leaders and line managers are also preparing to have their management skills developed. The company has trained 10% of staff in courses from professional management to English as a foreign language.



Funds to help management sharpen skills



Significant support is available for SMEs in the South West for leadership and management development (LMD) activities through the Train to Gain service – with Skills Brokers advising on a comprehensive package of development programmes for managing directors to supervisors.

In recent months, over 680 companies have taken advantage of funding to help offset the cost of leadership and management development.

A lack of leadership skills, particularly among SMEs, is an issue which costs UK PLC in excess of £6bn a year. This is compounded by the fact that the UK is trailing behind when it comes to investing in managers – spending significantly less than its European counterparts on management training. Yet over one half of CBI employers cite improving management and leadership skills as the most important factor contributing to competitiveness.

The programme has proved so successful that additional funds have now been made available to boost the effectiveness of senior staff in companies in the region.

'Leadership and management development can be overlooked as businesses tend to focus on generating revenue, particularly if they are on a path to fast track growth,' said Marion Sweet, LSC South West Skills Development Manager. 'However productivity, efficiency, staff retention and motivation, competitiveness and sustainable financial growth are all highly dependent on effective management teams.'

'Since the launch of the grant, we have had applications from businesses spanning almost every sector in the region. The response to the match funding has been excellent and we are already seeing the impact the training is having on these companies.'

Call 08456 047 047 for more information



Focusing on the future



Rockley Watersports is focusing on the future – thanks to a Leadership and Management (LMD) project last year.

With one training centre in Poole, Dorset, and three in France, the company has enjoyed considerable growth since its modest start in 1976 with just a few members of staff. Now it employs about 130 people during peak season in Poole alone and has earned a reputation for being one of Europe's most successful teaching and holiday businesses.

Rather than resting on its laurels, Rockley Watersports invited a Train to Gain Skills Broker to look at how the company's business performance could be improved and developed. Management coaching sessions were subsequently arranged with a local training provider.

'The coaching was very useful because it enabled us to focus on our current and future approaches to managing staff and the business,' said Peter Gordon, Managing Director. 'The sessions looked at a number of procedures and issues that can help to maximise management effectiveness, such as communication and leadership styles. We took note of people's strengths and weaknesses and allocated roles accordingly. At the end of the sessions we agreed future actions and more effective ways of working for the whole management team.'

'The training has certainly helped us to focus on the future. We have a new management approach which is certainly working for us.'

Entente cordiale

Like something out of a John Le Carre novel, East has met West!

Giving entente cordiale a whole new meaning, the South East and South West LSCs came together to take part in a collaborative regional Skills Broker induction workshop. The first event of its kind, the aim was to combine resources, share best practice and, with the help of some experienced facilitation, develop a two day Train to Gain induction programme.

The workshop was held in Reading and delegates – including some of the 21 new brokers who have recently joined their brokerage organisations – travelled from as far afield as Cornwall and West Sussex.

'They were all very keen to start honing their skills,' said Ingrid Purse, LSC South West Skills Development Manager – Train to Gain (Brokerage).

'The LSC induction programme is intended to support new brokers – underpinning their knowledge and ensuring operational safety in their important employer engagement role. Our facilitators made sure everyone was involved in a varied programme of activities that included regional groups and a practical internet session.'

Presentation topics at the event included the Leitch Review, the Train to Gain offer, partnership working and an introduction to broker standards.

'Evaluations have been very positive,' said Ingrid. 'The regions will be offering the programme to national colleagues with a view to developing similar activities for new broker recruitment.' East has met West and now will meet again in July 2008.

Sales force is doubled

A Chippenham manufacturing company has seen capacity increase by up to a quarter after training shop floor workers in lean manufacturing techniques.

Fascia Graphics, the market leader in the production of membrane keypads for the printed graphics industry has doubled the size of its sales force to eight as a result of making its processes more efficient.

'Since we started this improvement programme through Train to Gain, staff ideas for reorganising work areas have helped increase capacity at the factory by between 15 and 25 per cent,' said Gary Knowles, Training Manager. 'All of the staff have put ideas forward for improving processes which are all saving time and money. We have seen some very significant savings through these improvements.'

Fascia Graphics has now invested in increasing sales in order to make use of the extra capacity gained. In turn this is likely to have a positive effect on turnover figures, which have increased by between 5 and 10 per cent each year for the last three years.

The company, which now employs 57 people, originally got in touch with Train to Gain to find out about accessing funding for workforce training after a recommendation from a customer. Three workers at the company are about to complete Level 2 NVQs in Business Improvement Techniques.

Train to Gain Skills Broker David Keefe, of Business Link, worked with the company to find a training provider and source funding for employees eligible for training.

Training carried out both on and off-site was sourced through Avon Vale Training, which specialises in engineering training.



David says that as a result of the qualification, the production line has been rearranged and a "marked improvement" has been seen in working practices.

'The end result is that they now work more efficiently with their existing workforce and have gained 15-25 per cent more capacity without increasing their staff numbers or doing overtime,' he said.

Fascia Graphics plans to put a further three employees through the qualification next year.

South West Train to Gain skills stars

On the 24th April 2008 skills stars from across the region set the evening alight as the winners of the South West Skills Awards were announced.

Described as the 'Learning Oscars', the prestigious ceremony was organised and funded by the LSC South West to celebrate the exceptional achievements of individuals and organisations throughout the region.

Now in their second year, the Awards celebrate those who have embraced training and development and have gone the extra mile to achieve great things.

Over hundred and seventy South West apprentices, learners and employers attended the event, which took place at Sandy Park Stadium, Exeter.

Intrepid adventurer Ben Fogle took time out from crossing the Arctic Circle, scaling active volcanoes and running across deserts to deliver a motivational speech and present awards to the region's skills stars.

The awards for **Train to Gain Employer of the Year** recognised small, medium and large businesses that have improved their productivity and competitiveness through the help and advice of the Train to Gain service.

Tulip Foods, manufacturers and processors of quality meat products from St Austell, triumphed in the **'Train to Gain Large Employer of the Year'** category. Tulip Foods has worked closely with Train to Gain to implement a strategic learning programme in order to increase product quality and retain and develop employees. By the end of the year over 350 learners will have completed a Train to Gain full Level 2 programme.

Swindon based construction company Beard won **'Train to Gain Medium Employer of the Year'** for their staff development and training programme. The company made the 'Skills Pledge' and made a commitment to train all of their to Level 2 standard (equivalent to five good GCSEs). Beard is continuing to grow and gain more repeat business, which is undoubtedly because of its skilled workforce.



Ben Fogle (right) presents an award to Richard Bell from Mid Devon Community Recycling.

Exeter based Mid Devon Community Recycling were the **'Train to Gain Small Employer of the Year'** after implementing a highly successful training programme with the help of Train to Gain through its impartial advice and support on training for businesses.

The **'Success in Leadership and Management'** category recognised a small to medium sized enterprise that has participated in the Leadership and Management project through the Train to Gain service.

Berkeley based Cattle Country Adventure Park fully supports the advantages of taking up the funding for leadership and management development activity. The popular tourist destination won the award after introducing an integrated programme to develop the skills of their managers.

Malcolm Gillespie, Regional Director, LSC South West said: "This year's ceremony was a fantastic celebration of learning and development across the South West. We received a record number of entries so our winners and finalists can be very proud of their achievements.

"The awards enabled the LSC to showcase the outstanding contribution that individuals and businesses are making to raise skill levels and improve productivity and competitiveness throughout the region."

Sector Skills Councils and Train to Gain working together

As part of ongoing developments with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and Train to Gain, a well attended workshop allowed delegates to learn how Sector Skills Councils are taking forward the Train to Gain agenda. Presentations were delivered by four SSCs on how they had developed the way forward for their sector.



Skills for Logistics - as part of their commitment to the Skills Pledge, Skills for Logistics have set up a quality assured provider network in the form of a Regional Logistics Academy. Ongoing development of capability and capability building will enable them to be 'fit for purpose' to support major culture change within the industry. This will move training towards Continuous Professional Development for the Logistics sector which is underpinned by Part B of the Training Quality Standard' and supported by the Learning and Skills Council.

Lantra, covering 17 environmental and land based industries, is keen to use Train to Gain to break into their sector. By using a targeted approach they want to develop the expertise of brokers, have sector focused marketing, a flexible and varied offer at Level 2 and 3 and be able to recognise the right network and provision. They are positive about a demand led system which will encourage businesses to invest in training.

Construction Skills priorities for 2007/08 include qualifying their workforce and employer engagement through Train to Gain. Using a consortium approach through their On-Site Assessment and Training (OSAT) contract they are developing a sound brokerage

network with the aim to achieve full geographical and occupational coverage of the SW including specialist providers (currently 36) and NCC/NSC. Using robust common processes and partnership working with Train to Gain managers they are achieving successes in numbers including Levels 3 and 4 pilot candidates.

Working in partnership with the LSC, Train to Gain and the Strategic Health Authority, Skills for Health are involved in a Joint Investment Framework (JIF). This demand led, rolling three year agreement has a regional focus on Apprenticeships, Skills for Life, Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications within the sector. Local progress to date includes a flexible delivery for employer involvement. This is driven by the employers needs for real and immediate results.

Similar events have been requested as a forum for discussing the building of Train to Gain sector activity and as sector compacts develop more development workshops of this type are considered very valuable for all parties. Watch this space for more information!

Driving up performance

'Driving up Train to Gain Performance' was the theme for three provider events that took place in Bristol, Poole and Plymouth.

As well as giving comprehensive information about the new contract year, the events provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen working relationships between providers and the Train to Gain team and the impact it will have on the success of Train to Gain in the South West.

According to feedback from the discussion forums, delegates felt that a good deal had been achieved over the past year including improved marketing,

partnership building, links with, and understanding of, the skills brokerage service, quality of delivery, measurement of employee satisfaction and employer responsiveness.

Other discussion topics included the brokerage service relationship, funding, contracting, bureaucracy, employer engagement, communications, Level 3 and senior level buy in.

SOFA success



Seven employees at a Bristol social enterprise company have achieved NVQ Level 2 qualifications thanks to training brokered by Train to Gain.

SOFA Project, which celebrated its 25th anniversary with a visit from the Princess Royal, supplies re-used furniture, household goods and domestic appliances in the Bristol area. In its infancy it operated as a 'man with a van' but it now has twenty-three staff operating out of two warehouses, a workshop and eight lorries and vans which make furniture deliveries or pick ups. Whilst SOFA aims primarily to help low-income families, its shop in Old Market is open to anyone looking to find a bargain.

The company first contacted Train to Gain shortly after the scheme's launch in August 2006. Skills Broker Vicky Holford helped identify suitable courses to meet training needs, as well as sourcing free funding for eligible staff.

'We gave SOFA a list of suitable training providers who could deliver the training and from those they chose PDM Training and Consultancy,' said Vicky.

Staff have undertaken Level 2 NVQs in distribution, warehousing and storage operations, team leadership, customer service and driving goods vehicles.

'As a social enterprise we are keen to develop our staff but lack the cash resources to pay for training programmes,' said Julian Williams, Director of SOFA Project. 'I was aware of the NVQ programme but it has never been affordable. When this opportunity arose for funded training it was a great chance to give something back to the men and women who work so hard for SOFA, day in, day out.'

'The training has had an impact on the way the employees approach their work, making the company's working processes more effective and more strategic.'

Investment pays off



Training was a way of showing staff they were valued by an employer who wanted to invest in them

Thanks to Train to Gain, a successful partnership has been forged between a Poole mortgage company and local training provider Bournemouth and Poole College.

Vesta Money, which has seen fast growth since it was founded by three directors in 2002, now employs 50 people, mostly in its call centre.

Training in customer service is carried out internally but does not result in an externally-recognised qualification. The company therefore worked with Skills Broker Tricia Burst to help staff improve both their credentials and their future prospects.

'Our business likes to give people the chance to show what they can do, so there were quite a few employees who were eligible for the training.'

'We don't employ people specifically for their qualifications,' said Jenny Gerrard, Training and Development Coordinator. 'Our business likes to give people the chance to show what they can do, so there were quite a few employees who were eligible for the training.'

Working with Jenny and Vesta Money Director Lindy Jones, Tricia found that the priority was for the company to train employees in non-financial areas such as customer service and administration.

'Like many companies of their size, Vesta had an informal customer service policy but they wanted to be consistent,' said Tricia. 'By putting people through the customer service NVQ, they felt they were going to get consistency and raise the bar. They wanted to get good customer service and decided this was the best way of doing it.'

Tricia says training was also a way of showing staff they were valued by an employer who wanted to invest in them.

So far about eight staff have gained NVQs or are working towards them.

