

TRAIN TO GAIN GIVES A BOOST TO South West SMEs

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This week sees the launch of an advertising campaign to inform South West based businesses (particularly small and medium-sized enterprises -SMEs) of the £350m of additional funding given been to Train to Gain to help support companies in the current economic climate.

The national TV and radio adverts will be aired during peak programmes such as Coronation Street, The Bill and Emmerdale and will illustrate just how easy it is to get help with training.

Train to Gain offers free, impartial advice, support and funding to companies of all sizes, helping them to train and develop their employees. Since it's launch in 2006, more than 13,000 employers in the South West have improved the skills of their workforce skills through Train to Gain – but the Government wants to make it easier for businesses, particularly SMEs that make up 70% of South West based business to benefit. Last month, Skills Secretary John Denham announced that small businesses would be the focus of £350m of Government funds to help them train their staff.

Chris Minett, LSC South West Skills Development Director –Train to Gain, said: “Investing in training is essential to any business but it is more important than ever in the current economic climate. Research shows that companies that don't train are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those who do.

With so many SMEs based in the South West we appreciate that the current climate is difficult and company resources are focused on ensuring that they remain successful day-to-day. However, Train to Gain is an additional resource they can tap into to take away the pressure of finding the right training from the right provider. By helping to enhance the skills of their staff they will help to

increase the overall productivity and performance of this organisation which is essential for their future.”

The key elements of the new Train to Gain package for (SMEs) are:

- Extending the successful leadership and management programme so that more SMEs in the private sector can benefit from it, including companies with just 5 up to 249 employees;
- Relaxing the rules to allow workers to get relevant training at level 2 (equivalent to 5 GCSEs) even if they already have a previous qualification at this level; and more funding for training to level 3 (equivalent to two A-levels);

By contacting Train to Gain directly, employers can access their local skills broker, local college or learning provider to find out more about training available for their staff.

The television advertisement - part of the Learning and Skills Council's ongoing campaign, 'Our future. It's in our hands' – features a “hand ballet”.

More information on Train to Gain can be found via - www.traintogain.gov.uk or call 08457 046 046 to speak with a Train to Gain Skills Broker.

Ends

Note to Editors:

- To see a copy of the television advert, visit:

<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=X9dlwZlWrRY>

- Since its launch in 2006, Train to Gain has helped over 570,000 employees in England get training, and over 291,000 learners have achieved a qualification. An evaluation published this year revealed that some 43 per cent of people who had completed their training reported having received a pay rise, and 30 per cent reported having had promotion. The overall budget for Train to Gain, which is available free to all employers, is set to rise to 1bn by 2010-11.
- Secretary of State announced a new package of support for SMEs on Tuesday 21 October. Only private sector SMEs (i.e. with up to 250 employees) will be able to access the new flexibilities described above. The press notice can be found on the DIUS website at:
<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/environment/fullDetail.asp?ReleaseID=381864&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=False>

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. For more information visit: www.lsc.gov.uk/southwest

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