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future.  
It's in  
our hands.

# The Skills Pledge Findings July 2008



For more information about making the  
Skills Pledge call **0800 015 55 45** or visit  
**[lsc.gov.uk/skillspledge](http://lsc.gov.uk/skillspledge)**





## What is the Skills Pledge?

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment made by an organisation to invest in the skills of their workforce. It's a promise that, through training, the employer will work to boost the productivity and efficiency of their organisation and realise the potential of their employees — by developing their basic skills and helping them to work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs).

During spring 2008, 800 of the first 1,300 organisations to make the Skills Pledge were involved in a detailed research project to investigate the impact and outcomes of the Skills Pledge. Initial findings are very positive; although, as most organisations had been involved in the Skills Pledge for less than six months, the findings are only able to reflect the early stages for organisations starting to take their commitment forward.



## The overall findings are shown below, together with some employers' experiences



### **77% find it easy to make the Skills Pledge**

The process of making the Skills Pledge is easy.

*"It is difficult to sell the concept to other employers if we are not committed to it ourselves."*

**Sue Lovell, Business Centre Manager, Truro College**



### **83% felt that it helped the organisation to make a public commitment**

**Tristar Homes Ltd say:**

The public commitment to the Skills Pledge is a continuation of the commitment to the priority the company attaches to training, and this is embedded at board level. Working together, company managers and employees are more able to challenge barriers and overcome problems with release time for training when operational priorities conflict. The most significant benefit from making the Skills Pledge is the demonstration of the company's commitment to valuing employees. This is done through the embedding of the priority that is attached to the development and retention of employees as well as supporting the strong company ethos to be an employer of choice.



## 28% had not previously been involved in Train to Gain or Investors in People

### **Ethnic Access Link say:**

Making the Skills Pledge and then accepting support from a Train to Gain skills broker has helped the organisation to focus on specific training, designed to update individual skills through accredited courses. As a result of committing to the Skills Pledge, the organisation now has a comprehensive training plan. Ten permanent and seasonal staff have completed accredited training courses with a suitable provider, which has immediately added credibility and quality assurance to their business offer in a competitive market.



## At this early stage, 63% are already providing more training opportunities than before

### **Astins Ltd say:**

The Skills Pledge confirmed and recognised the company directors' investment in training and their philosophy of giving something back to their employees. This commitment and Train to Gain funding will help the company to increase the volume of training available. The next step is to develop a dedicated training school for the dry-lining sector.



### **Whitbread Group plc say:**

Among a range of new initiatives, Whitbread has introduced a system in which all business unit managers can nominate young employees to take part in an Apprenticeship, and now has 300 young people on a growing Apprenticeship programme. An Adult Apprenticeship is also available across the estate to ensure that age is not a barrier to training. The Apprenticeships are underpinned by a series of occupation and job-specific core skills workbooks. As part of a plan to address numeracy and literacy needs, 20,000 staff are being surveyed to help to develop and integrate a 'blended' programme of Skills for Life learning for those in need.



## 34% now have a training plan that they did not have before

### **JK Roofing say:**

Since making the Skills Pledge, the firm has developed its first formal training plan, which includes individual goals and training on more advanced competencies such as technologies for flat roofing. Training is offered to ensure that abilities are recognised through formal qualifications. The company also has its first Apprenticeship — at a local college that is affiliated to Construction Skills' National Construction College.



## Three in five respondents have increased the breadth of their training provision

### J Sainsbury plc say:

One of the largest retailers in the UK, with a workforce of 148,000, has expanded its training offer to include new Apprenticeships for particular aspects of food preparation. The National Employer Service, SkillsSmart Retail and Education Development International have helped the company to 'think outside the box' to map, deliver and accredit robust qualifications to improve industry skills along with basic skills such as literacy and numeracy.



## Over 80% are likely to recommend the Skills Pledge

### Dollond & Aitchison say:

The company considers the public acknowledgement for staff training that is obtained through the Skills Pledge to be a useful recruitment tool, and saw it as a valuable means of retaining and developing its existing staff base. Customer surveys show an increase in satisfaction levels since making the Skills Pledge (89% of customers report that they are likely to return and would recommend Dollond & Aitchison to family and friends), and the company's staff turnover has now fallen to 10% below the retail average.



### Training and Development Manager, Swallowcourt Group says:

*"Work with it, and it will increase productivity (which is good for the company), financial reward (which is good for the employees) and reputation (which is good for attracting new business and staff)."*



The Skills Pledge puts you in the driving seat and will lead to your organisation reaping the rewards that result from better skills, better business, better people and a better future. Making the Skills Pledge is a public commitment to increase the skills of your workforce. It's an ongoing promise that you'll continue to work to boost the productivity of your organisation and realise the potential of your employees.

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