

Our
future.
It's in
our hands.

The Skills Pledge

Your questions answered



For more information about making the Skills Pledge, call **0800 015 55 45** or visit **lsc.gov.uk/skillspledge**





What is the Skills Pledge?

The Skills Pledge is a public commitment by an employer to their workforce that they will develop the skills of their employees, including **all** employees lacking **basic skills or a first full Level 2 qualification**. It's a promise that, through training, the employer will work to boost the productivity and efficiency of their business 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).



What is the Skills Pledge for?

Successful employers see up-skilling and re-skilling their workforce as one of the most powerful things they can do to drive their business forward. The Skills Pledge can be the catalyst that creates a culture in which every employer takes that view — a culture in which individuals see improving their skills as one of the most powerful things they can do to help them realise their career aspirations and improve their lives.

The primary objective of the Skills Pledge in the context of the wider skills strategy and offer to employers is to tackle the market failure in relation to low skills, and to support more people in achieving a first full Level 2 qualification. The benefit to the employer is that it enables it to recognise the contribution that enhancing skills makes to improving organisational performance.



Why is the Skills Pledge important?

The UK must 'raise its game' on skills at all levels, if it is to sustain and improve its competitive position in the global economy. This was the view of the Leitch Review of Skills (*Prosperity for all in the global economy* published in December 2006), which also said that without a better-skilled and qualified workforce, we will not improve our productivity and will therefore be unable to sustain the living standards and quality of public services that we all expect.

The Skills Pledge fulfils this key recommendation, and is at the heart of a new deal where employers will be able to shape the skills system to meet their needs, in return for prioritising skills training at all levels.



Who is the Skills Pledge aimed at?

The Skills Pledge is open to employers of all sizes in England in the private, public and third sectors and is a corporate commitment made by the leader of the organisation, on behalf of the organisation.



How much does it cost to make the Skills Pledge?

The Skills Pledge isn't a product or a service: it's a commitment an employer makes to its employees, so in that sense it doesn't cost the employer anything. If an organisation invests in training, both the employer and the employee may be eligible for government funding.



What is required from an employer making the Skills Pledge?

All employers who make the Skills Pledge are asked to commit to the following minimum standards:

- Actively encourage and support all our employees to gain the skills and qualifications that will support their future employability and meet the needs of our business/organisation.
- Actively encourage and support all our employees to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, and with government support, work towards their first Level 2 qualification in an area that is relevant to our business/organisation.

- Demonstrably raise our employees' skills and competencies to improve company/organisation performance, through investing in economically valuable training and development.

The Skills Pledge is not a contract. Its value is as a signal of voluntary commitment and partnership between management and its workforce to develop employees' skills.

What's in it for employers?

The Government is strongly committed to supporting employers who invest in training their staff through the Skills Pledge.

When a business registers its intention to make the Skills Pledge, it will be able to access the support and advice of an impartial Train to Gain skills broker. 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.

Train to Gain skills brokers work with employers to understand business priorities, identify skills needs and design tailored training packages. Skills brokers will also be able to advise employers on the exact types of funding available.

How will employers benefit from improving the skills of their workforce?

Research clearly shows direct links between training and increased productivity, particularly when training was fully integrated with the business and linked with business objectives. Anecdotal evidence indicates that employers who have introduced a Skills for Life programme for their employees are experiencing a number of benefits, not least of which is a positive difference to the bottom line.

Benefits of training include improved productivity and efficiency; reduced sickness and absenteeism; better customer service; a more motivated and confident workforce; and fewer accidents and improved safety.

Furthermore, by committing to the future development of staff and improving business through training, businesses develop their reputation for providing excellence in the workplace, which in turn helps the recruitment process.

Surely businesses will cut their training and marketing budgets as the economic climate gets tougher. Will the Skills Pledge become redundant?

In these challenging times – even more so than usual – having a highly skilled workforce isn't an optional extra, it's an economic necessity. Not only will training help keep businesses buoyant during difficult economic circumstances, but it will also help keep them a step ahead of the competition in the future.

Businesses must remember that skilled employees are not only better at their job, they are also more likely to stay with the organisation for longer; they are able to communicate better with other colleagues and learn from each other more quickly. In turn, businesses benefit through improved levels of customer service, higher productivity and efficiency levels, ultimately delivering bigger profit margins.

By making the Skills Pledge, businesses are promising to offer their workforce the chance to gain the qualifications needed to realise such benefits. These measures are critical at a time when leaders rely on their workforce to do the best job they can.

Through the Skills Pledge, employers can access the advice of a Train to Gain skills broker who can help to identify the right training needed to make a strategic difference. Beyond this, brokers also point out where businesses are eligible for funding to help cover the cost of training.





Can employers train their staff to higher than Level 2?

Yes. Level 2 is the minimum standard recommended in the Leitch Review of Skills. However, understanding your skills needs and priorities is the key to business success. Employers are encouraged to up-skill their workforce to the levels required by their industry and their specific business needs.



How long do employers have to fulfil the Skills Pledge?

There is no deadline by which businesses must fulfil the Skills Pledge. The timeframes will vary according to how many employees need to be supported to gain basic skills and their first Level 2 qualification, and how much further beyond that core commitment an organisation wants to go.



How many employers have made the Skills Pledge so far?

In its first year, since its launch in June 2007, over 4,500 organisations made the Skills Pledge, including the Royal Navy, Tesco and Dollond & Aitchison. This means that almost 4.7 million employees are already benefiting from increased skills. A full list of organisations that have made the Skills Pledge can be found on the Skills Pledge website at lsc.gov.uk/skillspledge.



How does the Skills Pledge fit with Train to Gain and Investors in People (iP)?

The Skills Pledge is overarching: it signals that an employer wants to be the best — the best employer and the most successful. In delivering on their Skills Pledge commitments, an employer may access the Train to Gain service and Government support, and use the iP framework to evaluate the effectiveness of its investment in skills. Train to Gain and iP complement each other and can positively support an employer who is making the Skills Pledge.



What is the link between Local Employer Partnerships (LEPs) and the Skills Pledge?

LEPs are striving to prepare unemployed people for work and meet recruitment and skills needs, whereas the Skills Pledge commitment is about skilling or up-skilling all employees (new or existing) so that they can become a valuable and effective member of the workforce and contribute towards the success of an organisation. Working together, LEPs and the Skills Pledge can mean new, skilled and competent staff leading to a more effective and productive business. For the individual, it is a life-changing experience. For the employer, it's tapping into a pool of new talent.



What recognition will employers receive when they make the Skills Pledge?

The Government will run a long-term marketing and communications campaign that will raise awareness of the Skills Pledge and the importance of investing in skills. It will publicly celebrate the commitment of those businesses that have made the Skills Pledge, ensuring that others can learn from them.



How can employers get involved with the Skills Pledge?

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