

SKILLS PLEDGE

Purpose

The Skills Pledge is a voluntary, public commitment by the leadership of an organisation to support all its employees to develop their basic skills, including literacy and numeracy, and work towards relevant, valuable qualifications to at least Level 2 (equivalent to 5 good GCSEs). The purpose is to ensure that all staff are skilled, competent and able to make a full contribution to the success of the organisation.

The Pledge can be given by the Chief Executive or Board members, on behalf of the organisation. It is a corporate commitment covering the whole organisation. For those employees who do not already have a full Level 2 qualification, the Government will provide funding to help them gain basic literacy and numeracy skills as well as their first full Level 2 qualification.

The Skills Pledge is open to all employers of all sizes in the private, public and voluntary sector.

Background

If the UK economy is to compete with other advanced economies, we will have to invest more in skills. The case was set out starkly in the Leitch Report on Skills, published in December 2006. Without a better skilled and qualified workforce, we will not improve our productivity, and therefore we will not sustain the living standards and quality of public services we all want. The Skills Pledge recognises that everyone – the employee, the organisation and the Government – will need to invest more in skills.

Research shows that one of the keys to a productive, successful business is having a skilled and competent workforce. The Skills Pledge is an opportunity for the leaders of an organisation to show publicly and demonstrably the importance they place on investing in the skills of their people.

A large proportion of the public services workforce is not qualified to level 2. 120,000 or 19% of the workforce is without a level 2 qualification and 32,000 of the workforce have no qualifications at all. In recognition of this, in September 2007, Liam Byrne (Home Office Minister of State for Borders and Immigration, and Minister for the West Midlands) issued the following challenge to all public service employees in the region:

- Upskilling all your workforce to a minimum of level 2 as part of a wider organisational development program linked to your public service improvement plans and wider public service reforms.
- Tackling the basic skills needs of any employees who lack essential literacy, numeracy & communication skills.

- Prioritising the recruitment of local people from the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.
- Substantially increasing the number of young people (16-25 year olds) employed in public services through a high quality Apprenticeship program.

Local Commitment

The Learning & Skills Council's Train to Gain Service offers impartial, independent advice on training by providing a skills broker. Train to Gain will enable us to access training available locally, at Levels 1-2, funded through the Train to Gain service and therefore cost neutral.

The Corporate Development & Education Team have been providing the means and support to develop BEN PCT's directly employed staff, in developing basic skills, level 2 qualifications (NVQ's) & Apprenticeships for the past two years. This is in conjunction with the Skills Escalator and in line with personal development attached to the Knowledge & Skills Framework, to gain the basic skills and competencies that are valuable in supporting business needs and employees future employability, and to achieve relevant qualifications to recognise those skills.

By using the support now available from the Learning & Skills Council's Train to Gain Service, the PCT is able to expand its remit of its Skills Pledge, by not only making the Skills Pledge for directly employed staff, but for all staff employed by contracted services to the PCT. Contracted services accessing skills development via the Skills Pledge, will also then be able to benefit from further training and support offered via the Corporate Education & Training Department through a contracted services training network.

By taking this innovative approach of BEN PCT making its skills pledge not only for its directly employed staff, but for those also employed by contracted services, the PCT will be providing a lead to the wider employer community and accelerating the regeneration of our local communities, by investing in the skills of its wider workforce.

Commitment

If the above is agreeable, then BEN PCT would be making a commitment that we shall:

- *Actively encourage and support our employees and those of contracted services to the PCT to gain the skills and qualifications that will support their future employability and meet the needs of our organisation;*
- *Actively encourage and support our employees and those of contracted services to the PCT 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 organisation;*

- *Demonstrably raise our employees' and those of contracted services to the PCT skills and competencies to improve organisations performance through investing in economically valuable training and development.*

Recommendations

The Board is asked to consider the contents of this report and provide commitment to the pledge described above and within the purpose of the report.

**Ricky Manton, Corporate Development & Education Manager
January 2008**

References

Treasury Department, 2006: Leitch Review of Skills. Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills

HM Government, 2007: Skills Pledge – a leaflet for employers

Public Service Compact, 2007: Skills for Business – Skills for Life