

Briefing note

Train to Gain announcement of flexibilities for SMEs

10 November 2008



Leading learning and skills

The Train to Gain Service

Investment in skills is vital

It is vital that employers continue to invest in skills, especially at this time of economic challenge. As well as increasing productivity in the short-term, we know that employers who don't train are 2.5 times more likely to fail than those who do.

The Government has taken decisive action to widen the package of support available to small and medium sized businesses to help use training to meet the short term challenges, and to emerge stronger from this period well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities.

Train to Gain is helping businesses of all sizes and in all sectors

Train to Gain is the Government's flagship skills service for helping businesses to get the support they need to increase the skills of their workforce and improve the performance of their business.

Quality-assured, impartial and independent advice from skills brokers is available to those businesses who want:

- Help to identify skills needs at all levels of their business so that they can make the right, informed choices as part of a wider business needs analysis
- To identify and source high quality, vocational skills training, including Apprenticeships, delivered at a time and place to suit them, from a wide range of colleges and training providers.

A wide range of support is available

In response to employer demand, from August 2008 Train to Gain was significantly enhanced to ensure it provided a wider range of support and more help with the cost of training. All businesses now have access to:

Full funding for:

- Basic skills support at all levels
- First full level 2 qualifications (equivalent to 5 GCSEs) and
- First Level 3 (equivalent to 2 A-levels) for 19-25 year olds
- Some first Level 4 for 19-25 year olds who do not already have a Level 3
- Some funding for people who already have qualifications at Level 2 and 3 and would like to take another.

Shared investment between the employer and Government for:

- English for Speakers of Other Languages qualifications at all levels
- Apprenticeships
- For businesses with between 10 and 250 employees, support towards the costs of leadership and management development

In addition, Train to Gain can help businesses source full cost, higher level and bespoke training support.

Further enhancements to support small and medium sized businesses

As part of a government-wide package, the support available through Train to Gain has been tailored and enhanced to better meet the needs of smaller businesses. A new package of support will help small and medium sized, private sector, businesses to get the help they need to help them survive and prosper during tougher economic times.

Small and medium sized, private sector, businesses can also get support for:

- From January 2009 - Smaller, focused, training programmes in subjects demanded by businesses including: business improvement, business systems and processes, team working and communications, sales and marketing, IT User, IT support, customer service, new product design, finance and credit, cash flow and profit management, and risk management.
- From January 2009 – Fully funded Level 2 qualifications and partially subsidised Level 3 qualifications, regardless of whether the employee already has a qualification at this level.
- From November 2008 - Funding for leadership and management training extended to businesses with 5-10 employees.

In addition, businesses with less than 50 employees can still receive a contribution to wage costs to cover the cost of time off to train.

Full details on these new flexibilities will be available by the end of November.

Support tailored to meet sector specific needs

We recognise the particular needs of different sectors, and that is why DIUS, LSC and Sector Skills Councils have worked together to tailor and enhance Train to Gain through sector compacts. Ten compacts have been agreed so far and we expect more to follow over the next few months. Businesses have access to a range of benefits including:

- Tailored, sector-specific advice from skills brokers
- Joint Sector Skills Council-LSC marketing about the specific skills offer to employers in specific sectors, with information about qualification routes to meet industry standards
- For businesses with more than 250 employees, a full subsidy is available echoing the offer to smaller, private sector businesses at Level 2 and partially subsidised at Level 3 for people who are already skilled at that level for qualifications that SSCs say are the most important to the sector.

It's easy to access the wide range of support available through Train to Gain

We work with skills brokers, Business Link, colleges and training providers, and key stakeholders (such as the CBI, BCC, IoD and FSB) to ensure Train to Gain is delivered in a simple, non-bureaucratic way. Businesses can get support from Train to Gain by:

- Calling Train to Gain on 0800 015 55 45 to contact a skills broker
- Filling in the web-form on the Train to Gain website traintogain.gov.uk
- Contacting Business Link on 0845 600 9006 or visit www.BusinessLink.gov.uk
- Contacting their local college or training provider.