

Berkshire Colleges join forces to deliver **Train to Gain**

The Further Education (FE) Colleges in Berkshire have formed an innovative consortium to deliver the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) exciting new programme "Train to Gain" - which aims to help businesses across the county identify and undertake the training they need to succeed.

The Berkshire Principals stepped out together to launch the programme at Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) last week. The consortium, comprising BCA, Bracknell and Wokingham College, East Berkshire College, Newbury College, Reading Adult College and TVU, has an agreement from the LSC to deliver £2.4 million of Train to Gain provision to businesses in their main priority areas.

Jean Robertson, Principal of East Berkshire College (Lead Partner) said on behalf of the consortium: "The Berkshire Colleges have already established close and effective working relationships with industry. I am very pleased with the consortium approach to this new initiative as together we have the skills, expertise and facilities to ensure high quality training is delivered to employees in Berkshire. Train to Gain will foster even more collaboration between the colleges, raising the profile of FE and its role in supporting social and economic development."

Train to Gain will aim to address the significant skills shortages that continue to have a negative impact on productivity and competitiveness. In the South East, 27% of adults in the workforce lack a basic Level 2 qualification, equivalent to 5 good GCSEs, – the minimum set of skills and competencies needed to get on in working life.

It will target hard to reach businesses, which face the biggest challenges on time and cost when training employees to achieve a vocational qualification. The LSC's research shows that more than 3 million employers nationally, who



have not invested in vocational, Apprenticeship, or NVQ training over the last 12 months, could benefit from specialist skills advice.

The Berkshire Consortium of Colleges is in a position to offer training at a time and place that suits businesses in Berkshire with the majority being new employers or those previously not engaged in training. They can also offer advice about funding for training – which is available to help employees gain their first Level 2 qualification.

Peter Marsh, Skills Director, LSC South East, said: "Delivering high quality, flexible responsive training for employers is key to the success of Train to Gain. Train to Gain will be a huge opportunity for the learning sector to engage more employers and learners and to grow the training market. It also presents an opportunity for providers/colleges to win business from employers by ensuring that standards are high as well as delivering training flexibly to meet employer needs."

For more information about Train to Gain contact 01753 443858 or the South East Skills Brokerage on 08457 512288.

<http://www.businessinberkshire.co.uk>

