

**SKILLED STAFF NEEDED ACROSS EAST MIDLANDS:
PUBLIC SECTOR SKILLS CHALLENGE LAUNCHED BY
REGIONAL MINISTER
LEICESTERSHIRE RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM SKILLS PLEDGE
SIGN UP**

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Minister for the East Midlands Phil Hope today urged public sector organisations to ensure their staff have the skills they need to be more effective and efficient in serving the community.

Speaking at the launch of the East Midlands Public Sector Skills Challenge at Leicester's Walkers Stadium, the Minister praised the ten organisations that have signed the public sector skills pledge and called on others to do the same.

Eleven Leicestershire public sector organisations, including Leicester City Council and University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, led the way by signing the Government's Skills Pledge, a public commitment to supporting the skills development of all their employees to a minimum of NVQ Level 2 (the equivalent of five good GCSEs).

Minister for the East Midlands Phil Hope said:

“As the largest employer in the East Midlands, with a workforce of more than 520,000 people, the public sector has a key role to play in enhancing the skills of the current and future workforce, offering sustainable employment to local communities and ensuring high-quality service delivery.

“By 2010 the region’s public sector is going to need 60,000 more skilled recruits than it had in 2004. To achieve this, I want employers to ensure as many of their staff as possible have a Level 2 qualification, increase the proportion of young adults under 25 employed in public services by 25% with 4,000 new Apprenticeships across the region, and recruit 5,000 unemployed local people into entry level and essential occupations.

“The ten Leicestershire services that have signed up to the Skills Pledge today are clearly demonstrating the importance of their investment in the development of their staff, the quality of their service and the prosperity of their local communities. I’d urge other public sector organisations across the East Midlands to lead the way for other employers by fulfilling the Government’s Skills Pledge.”

Cllr Ross Willmott, Leader of Leicester City Council said:

“By making the Skills Pledge we’re declaring our commitment to our employees, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to make sure they can do the best job they can for the people that live, work and visit Leicester.

“With a skilled workforce we can improve productivity and our service to create a more motivated workforce and become a leader of economic prosperity for the region.

“We are committed to making a major contribution to reducing the number of young people not in education, employment and training and helping to regenerate deprived communities providing jobs for the people of Leicester to contribute to a stronger more economically prosperous city.

“We also hope that by making the Skills Pledge we can show other public sector services that we are an employer that is committed to developing our workforce.”

Tom Crompton, Regional Director for the LSC East Midlands, said:

"Skills are vitally important for individuals, for their future employability and for the success of organisations throughout the UK. We are delighted that nine Leicestershire organisations have signed up and hope that their commitment to the skills of their employees and quality services for their communities will encourage other public sector organisations to sign up.”

Roger Begy, Chair of the LSC Regional Council and Leader of Rutland County Council, who have made the Skills Pledge also spoke in support of the Minister’s challenge.

Ten public sector organisations across Leicestershire signed up to the Skills Pledge today: Leicester City Council, Leicester City PCT, Leicestershire Constabulary, Leicester College, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, Regent Sixth Form College, Wyggeston and Queen Elizabeth 1 College, Leicestershire and Rutland Probation Service, and South Leicestershire College. They join Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, who were one of the first organisations in the East Midlands to sign up

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Notes to Editors:

1. Photographs available. Visit <http://nds.coi.gov.uk> or call Helen Clarke at COI News and PR on 0115 9712787
2. The Leitch Review of Skills, published in December 2006, warned that the UK must 'raise its game' on skills at all levels if it is to sustain and improve its position in the global economy. The Skills Pledge fulfils a key recommendation made in the review, 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.
3. The Skills Pledge is a voluntary commitment by employers to increasing the skills of their workforce for the benefit of the business.
4. For more information about the Skills Pledge visit www.traintogain.gov.uk/skillspledge

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