



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Report finds continuing inequality for women and unskilled workers**

A new report says that many of Britain's unskilled, low paid workers are caught in a 'skills trap', often receiving little or no training from their employers, and that highly-trained women lag behind male colleagues when it comes to pay and progression. The report, by the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development, says that the Government and businesses must do more to support women and unskilled staff, and warns that current initiatives must be updated to deal with the recession.

According to the report, *Who Trains?*, which studied organisations' training practices across the UK, unskilled and low paid workers are less likely than their skilled colleagues to receive training. This 'skills trap' means that some of the UK's lowest-paid people have little opportunity to improve their chances of promotion and higher pay. As a result, the pay gap between skilled and unskilled staff is growing. The report adds that current Government initiatives – such as the flagship Train to Gain scheme – are not doing enough to help, and must to be updated to deal more effectively with the recession.

Matilda Gosling, the report's author, said that she was 'deeply' concerned about the effects of the skills trap during the recession. 'It's a worrying finding in terms of opportunity and progression,' she said. 'Those with the lowest skills are given little chance to improve them, while those with higher skills carry on accruing more because employers see greater returns from training their most educated staff. The pay gap is getting ever wider, and this is putting terrible pressure on some of the people least able to cope with the effects of the recession.'



Ms Gosling added that the Government had to create better incentives for employers to train the UK's least highly skilled and lowest paid employees. 'Train to Gain is a blunt instrument. It should be helping those most in need of upskilling or reskilling, but it often seems to fund training that employers would have carried out anyway. Our message is clear – the Government has to target unskilled and low paid workers with better training mechanisms as a matter of urgency.'

The report, due for publication on Tuesday, also says that UK women tend to receive more training from their employers than men, adding that this contradicted other research. This 'gender surprise', however, contrasts with the fact that women are not being rewarded for their skills to the same extent as their male colleagues. The report calls on employers and the Government to work harder to ensure that women are recognised for their skills.

Ms Gosling said, 'we were surprised to find that women generally receive more training than men. Sadly, it wasn't so surprising that this training doesn't seem to boost women's pay and promotion prospects as much as it does for their male colleagues. The Government's equal opportunities rhetoric must become a reality, especially in the current economic climate.'

Dame Ruth Silver, Principal of Lewisham College, welcomed the report. 'This has arrived at a critical time during the economic crisis,' she said. 'It would be easy for the skills community to go back to old, bad behaviours, but the report reminds us both of how far we've come in training, and how far we have yet to go – particularly for women and the unskilled. If we don't continue to work hard to provide training to everyone in need, and to eliminate outdated



barriers facing women in the workplace, we could be digging a hole that might prove too deep to escape from in the future.'

The TUC's learning body, unionlearn, also backed the report. Its director, Liz Smith, said: 'Yet again we see that those who do worst out of formal education get less training in the workplace, with employers giving more time off to those already in professional jobs. It's also terrible news that women are not being rewarded for their new skills to the same extent as men, in spite of the fact that they are getting more training. Skills alone do not bring equality for women, as other issues such as working culture, employer attitudes to flexible working, the availability of affordable childcare and the value placed on women's contribution all impact on their position in the labour market. We hope that this report adds to the calls for ending the gender pay gap and making full use of women's talents across the workforce.'

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To follow up or to arrange an interview, please contact Andy Wasley, PR & Communications Manager, on [andy.wasley@skillsdevelopment.org](mailto:andy.wasley@skillsdevelopment.org), +44 207 294 3576 or +44 7813 886189.

Notes to editors.

1. The City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development's report, *Who Trains? A Picture of Companies' Training Practices Across the UK*, was based upon an analysis of the 2008 edition of the UK's 2004 Workplace Employment Relations Survey. It will be available to download from [www.skillsdevelopment.org](http://www.skillsdevelopment.org) from 00.01 on 21 Apr.
2. The report's key findings are:
  - **Routine unskilled and low paid staff suffer from low investment in training.** The Government should create incentives for employers to train the least highly skilled and lowest paid members of their workforces.
  - **Women appear to receive more training than men.** However, other research shows that once women do get more remunerative training, such as general training and training which increases opportunities for promotion, they are not rewarded for their new skills to the same extent as men.
  - **The size and reach of an organisation determines the extent to which it engages in training.** Generally speaking, the larger an organisation's workforce, the more time it is likely to allow off for training. Further, the more premises or locations from which an organisations operates, the more likely it is



to allow staff time off for training. This suggests an urgent need to improve the help offered to small businesses to help them engage with training.

- **Public sector and not-for-profit organisations provide more time off for training** than private sector organisations.
- **Skills development is an integral part of a high performing workplace.** Skills development on its own is insufficient to ensure business growth. However, when it is combined with other high performance working practices – such as effective business planning, innovation and good reporting practices – it has a strong link with organisational performance. Better signposting of the benefits of high performance working is needed, and organisations need to work hard to build mutual trust between employers and employees in order to help develop high performance working practices.
- **There is a clear regional skills divide**, exacerbated in certain areas by strong differences between a region's skills levels and the extent to which employers train. In the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber, employers train to a much greater extent than the regions' skills levels would suggest. In the East Midlands, employers train to a much lesser extent than the region's skills levels would suggest. This could be caused by the structure of the local economy, by levels of activity among regional skills players and by migration patterns.

3. The [City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development](#) is an independent, not-for-profit research and development body which is committed to improving the policy and practice of work related education and training internationally. It works with organisations around the world – principally with policy makers, employers, training providers and learners – to share knowledge and help to lead the debate on policy and practice, aiming to achieve its vision of a world in which all people have access to the skills they need for economic and individual prosperity. It is an independent part of the City & Guilds Group.