



PRESS RELEASE

Don't neglect older learners: City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development responds to the Conservatives' "Get Britain Working" proposals

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Responding to the "Get Britain Working" presentation at the Conservative Party conference, the City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development's Senior Manager for Policy and Practice, Kate Shoesmith, welcomed the party's commitment to investing in vocational education and training and expressed support for Lord Baker's Technical Colleges initiative. She added, however, that provision for older people to upskill and reskill will be essential for the UK to improve its competitive position in the future.

Technical colleges

Commenting on Lord Baker's proposals to establish technical colleges, Shoesmith warmly welcomed the initiative as potentially increasing the choice for young people to pursue educational pathways most suited to their needs. She particularly welcomed the close link with universities and the potential for greater connectivity between vocational and higher education in the UK. She stressed, however, that close attention should be paid to the quality of training provided in such colleges, and that the initiative would need to be carefully managed to ensure it reduces, rather than exacerbates, the vocational / academic divide. She also pointed out that Further Education colleges already provide extensive vocational and practical training and that the UK's skills needs could also be well served by providing more support to FE, for instance by giving the sector equivalent funding and autonomy to that granted to the Higher Education sector.

Apprenticeships

Shoesmith welcomed the Conservatives' pledge to support apprenticeships, which have a crucial role to play in building skills levels in the UK, but emphasised that they would not suit the needs of all. She pointed out that adults in need of upskilling and reskilling will not always be in a position to undertake a full apprenticeship, and that there should be a range of options in place to support their needs. Similarly, she added, a quality classroom-based vocational option should not be denied to young learners for whom it is the preferred option.

ENDS

To follow up or to arrange an interview with Kate Shoesmith, please contact Heidi Agbenyo on heidi.agbenyo@skillsdevelopment.org, 020 7294 3230.

Notes to editors.

1. **About CSD.** The [City & Guilds Centre for Skills Development](http://www.skillsdevelopment.org) is a not-for-profit research and development body which is committed to improving the policy and practice of work related education and training internationally. It aims to achieve its vision of a world in which all people have access to the skills they need for economic and individual prosperity. To do this, it works worldwide with policy makers, employers, training providers and learners to share knowledge and help to lead the debate on policy and practice. It is a part of the City & Guilds Group.