

News for Businesses



JULY 2006

Produced by the Rural Economy Team at North Dorset District Council

WELCOME

Welcome to the third, and my final, edition of the newsletter. I hope you found the first two editions helpful and informative. The newsletters include a range of information collated from the wide range of business support agencies located in Dorset. This edition contains some important news that directly affect businesses in respect of new legislation and support for businesses. I hope you find it interesting and informative.

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Age Regulations come into force 1st October 2006

The Government have announced that new Age Regulations are due to come into force, subject to Parliamentary clearance, on 1 October 2006.

The Regulations cover employment and vocational training, including access to help and guidance, recruitment, promotion, development, termination, perks and pay. The regulations cover people of all ages, both old and young.

All employers, providers of vocational training, trade unions, professional associations, employer organisations and trustees, and managers of occupational pension schemes will have new obligations to consider.

Goods, facilities and services are not included in these Regulations.

Upper age limits for unfair dismissal and redundancy will be removed.

A national default retirement age of 65 will be introduced making compulsory retirement below age 65 unlawful (unless objectively justified). This will be reviewed in 2011.

All employees have a right to request to work beyond the default retirement age of 65 or any other retirement age set by the company and all employers will have a duty to consider requests from employees to work beyond age 65.

Occupational pensions are covered by the regulations, as are employer contributions to personal pensions. However, the regulations generally allow pension schemes to work as they do now. See Regulations for more details.

The Regulations do not affect state pensions.

Members of the regular armed forces, full-time and part-time reservists and unpaid volunteers are not covered by the Regulations.

For further details and to view the full draft regulations, visit the DTI website: www.dti.gov.uk/er/equality/age.htm.

If you need further advice, please contact ACAS, the nominated agency to provide advice and guidance on age issues: **0845 7474747** or go online at www.acas.org.uk.

For good practice help and information, visit the Age Positive website: www.agepositive.gov.uk.

These Regulations cannot be ignored by businesses who employ staff. Be prepared and act now. Review your employment policies and practices, obtain more information through the above websites and consult with your legal adviser.

Workplace Health Connect

Last year in Great Britain, 28 million working days were lost through work-related ill health. You might think that everyday conditions like stress, asthma or back pain are something all of us just have to put up with. In fact, there are some quite simple, low cost steps which will make everyone healthier—and make businesses more profitable as well.

Workplace Health Connect is a free no obligation service set up in partnership with the Health & Safety Executive. They provide free, practical advice on workplace health and safety, working with both managers and staff. Their aim is to transfer knowledge and skills direct to companies, so they can tackle future issues themselves.

Workplace Health Connect has been designed to help SME's, that is Small and Medium Enterprises. There is no single definition of a small firm, mainly because of the wide diversity of businesses. However, the common definition is companies of a size between 5 and 250 employees.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions announced details of the Workplace Health Connect support programme late last year. Introduction of the support service has been brought to our attention by our Environmental Health colleagues.

Further details can be obtained through the Advice line: **0845 6096006** or via the website: **www.hse.gov.uk/workplacehealth**

Train to Gain—a new service for employers

Train to Gain will be introduced across Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole in August. This new dynamic service to employers is designed to put their business and skills development needs first and identify clear and comprehensive training solutions.

Train to Gain will help improve employers' productivity and competitiveness by ensuring their employees have the right skills to do the job, including achieving Level 2 qualifications and improving their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

This service will mark a cultural shift in how training is delivered, making it more flexible with employers setting the pace on who, when and how people are trained.

Why is it needed?

15% of employers in Dorset claim to have skills gaps, and with these gaps costing a typical 50-employee business an estimated £165,000 in lost revenue each year, skills training has never been more important.

In addition, by 2012, 85% of jobs will require skills and competencies at or around Level 3 and yet significant numbers of the UK workforce are not qualified to Level 2.

At the heart of the new service is an independent and impartial brokerage service that will provide

comprehensive advice on an employer's training needs and provide access to relevant and flexible quality training. The brokers will act 100% in the interests of the employer.

Managed by Business Link, the brokers are a vital element in reaching out to those employers who do not usually offer structured or qualification-led training to their staff.

Employers will receive:

- Analysis of training needs against the business objectives
- Recommendations on training solutions (clearly identifying elements which attract Govt. funding and those where the employer has to pay)
- Easy access to relevant, flexible and high quality training
- Information and advice for employees about qualifications and training
- Ongoing support to identify future skills needs

For further information or to register an interest in Train to Gain and receive more information, call the South West Advice Line: **08456 047047**, Monday to Friday 8.30am-5.30pm or visit:

www.traintogain.gov.uk

North Dorset People & Places Awards 2006

North Dorset District Council has recently launched the People & Places Awards for 2006. Nomination forms are available in a range of public outlets across the District or from the Council offices in Blandford.

With 25 categories in six themes, this will be the second year of the awards. We have been fortunate to receive sponsorship for many of the awards already, but are still seeking additional sponsors. If you are interested in sponsoring any of the awards, please contact the Council on 01258 484005/01258 474275.

The six themes for this year's awards are:

Community and business—for unsung heroes, local organizations and businesses who contribute to their community and as a reward for good customer care.

Tourism—customers can nominate the best ambassadors for the district.

Arts—for creative, original and increased opportunities for communities to benefit from the arts.

Sports—for top achievement by individuals or teams over the past 12 months.

Conservation—for contributions to preserving and enhancing the built and natural environment of the district.

Recycling—for those committed to protecting the environment, minimizing waste and raising awareness of recycling.

We would like to encourage all of our micro/small businesses to consider promoting the awards to their customers, especially those employing 10 or less. There are several categories specifically aimed at rewarding micro businesses:

- Small Business of the Year
- Retail Business of the Year
- Best Holiday Accommodation
- Best New Tourism Business
- Best Visitor Attraction

Further details are available on the Council's website: www.north-dorset.gov.uk

Support to North Dorset Tourism Businesses

Following the departure of the Council's Tourism Officer earlier this year, North Dorset tourism businesses can now turn to Wimborne for help with tourism development and promotion.

North and East Dorset District Councils have worked together to build up the Rural Dorset brand to attract high-spending, environmentally aware visitors to the area. In future, Rural Dorset will be managed centrally at Furze Hill, with North Dorset District Council contributing towards the costs.

The Rural Dorset brand was created in 2000 when North and East Dorset District Councils started working together on tourism issues. Over the following five years they produced a joint brochure

and website and a fully integrated marketing campaign.

More recently, tourism leaders have realised that they could achieve even more by drawing in funding from right across the county and invest in a county-wide e-tourism data and e-booking investment project. The Destination Management System is currently being procured, with the aim of introducing it later in the year. This will provide a one-stop shop for visitors looking to stay and attend events in the area.

For the next two years, North Dorset businesses will be supported by East Dorset District Council. If you would like support or further information please contact Rachel Limb: **01202 639031**.

The Council's website is a very valuable source of information. It provides information of the range of support available to businesses and contact details of organisations who can assist with a variety of issues: www.north-dorset.gov.uk

North Dorset Business Breakfast

North Dorset District Council, in partnership with Business Link and the Federation of Small Businesses, hosted its second business breakfast event in April at Shaftesbury School. The event focused on addressing some of the key business/skills development issues experienced by many small businesses, through a range of presentations and interactive working group sessions.

Representatives from 35 businesses attended, together with representatives from the main partners and Yeovil College, Bournemouth & Poole College, Paragon/ITE Training Group and Delta Group—private training and business development providers.

The breakfast was provided by a local caterer, Provisio, who are based in Lytchett Matravers, and source the majority of their ingredients from local food and drink producers.

All attendees were invited to provide feedback immediately after the event and 75% rated the business breakfast event as good or better.

Arrangements are being put in place to arrange a follow-up event later in the year. Further details will follow.

Business Support Organisations

The following information is provided to assist you with making contact with the relevant business support organisation which will be able to respond to your specific needs as a business.

Business Link Wessex

Business Link Wessex specialize in helping businesses across Dorset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight to develop and grow. They offer access to a comprehensive network of business contacts, information, seminars and advice, to enable businesses to realize their ambitions. Most of their services are free of charge or subsidized.

Website: www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

Advice Line: 08454 588558

Federation of Small Businesses

The FSB is the largest campaigning pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small firms. Formed in 1974, it now has over 185,000 members across 33 regions and 230 branches.

Website: www.fsb.org.uk

Wessex Regional Office - Tel: 01425 280080

Email: colin.jamieson@fsb.org.uk

Dorset Business

Dorset Business is the Chamber of Commerce & Industry for Dorset. It is an independent organisation that has been created to benefit its members' businesses and to enhance the business environment of Dorset. The Chamber provides services that can make financial savings for members.

Website: www.dcci.co.uk

Tel: 01202 714801 (Chief Executive)

Email: peter.scott@dorsetbusiness.net

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