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## National award for essential skills training initiative

Skills for You, Serco's programme to offer employees essential skills training alongside work based learning, has won a prestigious national award. At the annual Business in the Community awards in London (Tuesday 5 July) Serco's initiative won the *Rentokil Initial Skills for Life* award.

Participants in the scheme have described how the Skills for You programme has opened up new opportunities at work and at home – from completing forms to reading bedtime stories.

The Skills for You programme gives staff access to learning and development in ways that suit employees and managers. By working with local managers in several of its UK based contracts, Serco has been able to offer employees training in areas that are relevant, such as 'understanding your pay cheque' or 'writing a business letter and CV'.

So far, 628 employees are on training programmes and the company has seen an improvement in motivation and confidence, with increasing numbers of employees applying for supervisory roles or promotion. Serco now aims to extend the initiative across its 600 UK contracts.

Jill Garfitt, Serco Skills for You Project Director said:

"Serco is a values based business. Our governing principles form the heart of the organisation. When we commit to 'Enabling People to Excel', we mean that we value our people. We want them to grow personally and professionally and to experience learning as enjoyable and relevant to their lives. We want to help our people progress on their chosen career path and outside the workplace.

"Our contract managers have been so responsive, encouraging their people to come forward.

"Since its inception, we have championed the Government's Skills for Life programme to other employers and have promoted it through a number of external conferences. We are sharing our experience with the Government, the Learning and Skills Council and DfES. and will be leading a Sector Skills pilot in Northern Ireland based on our model."

### Case Study:

In Portsmouth, at our marine services contract we are responsible for all water born services for the Navy.

Having gained the commitment of the contract management team, Jill Garfitt, Skills for Life Project Director worked with their designated champion and union representatives from the TGWU and PROSPECT, to select Portsmouth College as the training provider.

The college wanted to understand what our people did and what they would be interested in learning so they sailed out onto the vessels to talk with the men.

They set up a road show, so that any employee could have a go at the short confidential assessment test. As a result, 25 staff attended the assessments with 17 having needs identified and 3 diagnosed with dyslexia.

Now each week, Portsmouth tutors come onto the dockyard for a day and work with employees on identified skills areas. A real example of a partnership approach between all key stakeholders.

One spin off was a boost in confidence and motivation - among those who did the assessment and found that they already had a good level of essential skills! They realised that they were better than they thought.

#### Quotes from participants

- "I am just grateful to have been given the opportunity to improve my literacy skills, as I have never had the chance before." Lloyd Johnson, Fuel Supervisor, Serco Marine Services Portsmouth
- "Not only do I have the chance of adding a nationally recognised qualification to my CV, I can also help my children with their GCSE's." Nigel Parker, Chief Engineer, Serco Marine Services Portsmouth
- "It was a fantastic idea to do the course, and this has benefited me and other members of my team." Mala Kathorian, Supervisor, Serco Health Services, Leicester
- "I decided to brush up on my maths and am surprised at just how much I had forgotten." Ann Noble, HR Administrator

#### Notes to Editors

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