

THE NEW PLEDGE - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is the new pledge different from the previous one (the Skills Pledge managed by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC))?

The new pledge is different in that it is not a prescribed initiative with a core set of pre-determined commitments that employers must sign up to. New pledges will be developed by employers in response to real business issues. The commitments and actions delivered will, therefore, vary from pledge to pledge.

Why should we develop a pledge?

Employers can use the pledge as a tool to help resolve business issues. If there is a genuine need for a tool such as the pledge to support collective employer agreement and action then it can resolve or remove barriers to skills issues.

Who can develop a pledge?

The purpose of the new pledge is to support collective employer action. Employers must therefore lead the developments. These developments will be supported by intermediary organisations such as Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), National Skills Academies (NSAs), professional institutions, employer representative organisations and area-led networks such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).

Are there any examples of pledges that we can look at to inform the development of our pledge?

Yes, we have listed a range of pledges in the annexes in the guidance document on our website.

What targets will we have to deliver if we sign up to a pledge?

There are no core targets or commitments within the new pledge. What groups of employers choose to sign up to is up to them. This will be determined by the challenges or opportunities they deem most important and the solutions they agree are right.

We have developed guidance that provides ideas on what commitments or actions you might like to commit to but these are suggestions. The new pledge is not like the previous Skills Pledge. It is up to intermediaries with their employers to determine what commitments and actions will address their skills needs.

What funding is available for the pledge?

There is no specific funding stream to support the development of the pledge. However, pledge developments could form part of an Employer Investment Fund (EIF) or Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF) proposal or even a Regional Growth Fund (RGF) proposal. A pledge can be used to demonstrate collective employer commitment to a solution or it can be a tool that supports the development of an innovative solution seeking EIF/GIF/RGF funds.

How will the new pledge be monitored by the Commission?

The Commission will not audit pledges or hold a database of commitments. We have proposed a three level monitoring and review process in the guidance. At the level of the Commission, we propose that pledge impact be evaluated via existing surveys and light touch monitoring to provide information on the number of pledges being developed and how many employers and employees are involved will be carried out as a matter of course. However, the main responsibility for monitoring and evaluating impact will be with the intermediary. Our guidance suggests that the intermediary agrees with employers what monitoring should look like for their pledge and put in place the relevant processes at intermediary and employer (company level).

How many pledges will there be?

There is no pre-determined or “right” number of pledges. The pledge will be the right tool for some sectors and geographic areas but not for others and the Commission or government does not have a specific target in mind.

If there are different approaches to the pledge this will result in a series of tailored models. This means that the concept becomes fragmented. How will the Commission ensure the quality of pledges?

We have proposed a light touch quality assurance process in which we identify pledges that are under development or have been developed on our website. We will promote good practice through the production of case studies. We also expect the intermediary will promote the impact of its pledge through a number of communication routes including their website.

How long is the new pledge valid for?

The timescales for the development, delivery and review of the pledge are subject to the specific needs of the group of employers. It is for each intermediary, working with their

employers, to determine. It is expected, however, that a pledge will be valid whilst actions are still being taken and where impact can still be demonstrated.

How does the pledge link to IIP?

There are no formal links between a pledge and IIP. The pledge is for groups of employers to take forward whereas IIP is the standard for an individual company. However, if you have signed up to a pledge, this could be potential evidence towards your IIP accreditation.

Our sector consists of mainly micro businesses and freelancers – can a pledge work for us?

We do not suggest any eligibility criteria for either intermediaries or employers in our guidance. The pledge, therefore, could be taken forward within sectors with any size of business if it is identified as the right tool to address the skills issues within that sector. It is the responsibility of the intermediary, working with employers, to ensure that the pledge that is developed is fit-for-purpose and flexible enough in terms of commitments to ensure that skills outputs and outcomes are appropriate for that sector.

We don't want to be forced into doing a pledge as an additional initiative when we have solutions already in place that are working for our sector. How can we take it forward alongside our existing activity?

The pledge is not compulsory so it is up to the intermediary and employers to determine its use for their sector or geographic area. The new pledge is not prescriptive so if you do decide that it is the right tool to address skills issues, you will agree with your employers on how it fits with your current solutions and activity.

Can public sector employers be involved in pledges?

Yes, the pledge is a tool that can be used in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Does there need to be a specific pledge for public and voluntary sectors?

No – the new pledge is an overarching concept. It is employer-led and non-prescriptive. It is, therefore, down to employers and their intermediaries to tailor the pledge concept, using our guidance as support, to meet their specific needs.

Can pledges be taken forward in geographical areas as opposed to sectors?

Yes, pledges can be taken forward by groups of employers who recognise a common issue needs to be resolved and agree that the pledge is an appropriate tool to do so.

Can we call our pledge something that has more meaning to our employers?

Yes, the examples in the guidance are called accords, protocols and charters. The pledge is an umbrella term that describes the overarching concept but does not have to be used for the specific employer-led pledges that will be developed.

Are pledges just for SSCs to develop – or can other bodies take forward pledges?

Pledges can be taken forward by employer representative organisations. It is not just targeted at SSCs. We envisage National Skills Academies, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Professional Institutions and others could be well placed to develop pledges with their employers and there are example in the annexes of our guidance document that have been developed by a range of employer organisations.

Pledges already exist for some employers in our sector – is it possible to develop a further pledge in this context or would that become unmanageable?

The new pledge is employer-led. It is therefore up to employers and their intermediaries to determine whether another pledge is the right tool to address skills problems. We do not consider multiple pledges within a sector, industry or geographical area to be a problem, as long as employers determine the need for them.

How do I renew my existing Skills Pledge certificate?

We will not be issuing certificates to recognise new pledges. It is up to the employers and intermediaries leading pledge developments to determine how individual pledge commitments should be recognised - either through certificates or collective signing opportunities or by listing companies on intermediary websites. The Commission will be listing pledges on the website at www.ukces.org.uk/pledge in order to recognise good practice. The Commission's website will provide a direct link through to the intermediaries pledge webpage.

Existing Skills Pledge certificates recognise what was achieved under a previous government-led initiative so, although this does recognise achievement, it does not fit within the policy approach for the new pledge and so we will not be able to reissue or update

certificates. We recommend you contact your Sector Skills Council to see whether there are any pledge developments taking place that you can contribute to.