

*****PRESS RELEASE*****



**SPORTS SKILLS ISSUES TO BE TACKLED BY
NEW SECTOR SKILLS COUNCIL**

The new Sector Skills Council for the active leisure and learning sector, SkillsActive, will today receive its full licence from Secretary of State for Education, Charles Clarke.

SkillsActive is the fourth of 23 Sector Skills Councils to receive a full operating licence with the rest coming on stream by mid 2004. Collectively these Councils form the Skills for Business Network (SfB) which is responsible for helping and encouraging employers to improve the skills levels of their employees so that productivity and performance can be increased.

This is a crucial part of the Government's strategy to tackle education in the UK, as set out in its White Paper published last June.

Charles Clarke will hand the licence over at a ceremony to be held on the evening of 14th October 2003 at the House of Lords.

Mr Clarke said: "As an important contributor to the UK economy we want to ensure those employed in the field are the best they can be. To achieve this SkillsActive will work with employers so their needs are met by improving the quality of training that can be accessed and encouraging businesses to be involved in the development of courses."

Stephen Studd, CEO of SkillsActive said: "SSC status is a real recognition from Government for the sector. We are not just responsible for improving the levels of skills for those employed in the sports industry. We also look after workers in fields such as playwork, health and fitness, the outdoor sector, and the caravan industry.

"SkillsActive seeks to develop a competent and qualified workforce which is essential in an industry where issues such as health and safety, child protection, and customer service are vital. We'll help employers improve motivation and the development of strong technical skills which are essential for people such as coaches, instructors and those working with children."

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The SfB is administered by the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA).

Margaret Salmon, CEO of the SSDA, said: “The sectors represented by SkillsActive employ about 2.38 million, working in more than 230,000 organisations from sports centres, to playgroups. Yet about a quarter of employers in these areas say their staff often don’t have all the required skills to do their jobs, and over 30% always have hard to fill vacancies at any given time.”

“Our vision at the SfB is to create a skilled workforce in all industries because the workers are at the centre of the economic and social development of the nation.”

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About SkillsActive

1. Skillsactive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for sport & recreation, playwork, health and fitness, outdoor education/training and adventure and caravan industries.
2. Skillsactive's mission statement is "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within the Sector through improvement of personal and corporate skills thereby enabling the Sector to achieve its economic and social potential."
3. SSCs are employer led organisations that aim to tackle the skills and productivity needs of their sector throughout the UK. SSCs provide employers with the opportunity to provide leadership to meet their sector's skills and business needs. In return they receive substantial public investment and greater dialogue with government departments across the UK.