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**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\***

**BROWN ALLOCATES £65M TO EMPLOYER TRAINING PILOTS**

**Chancellor Gordon Brown delivered an election-focused budget in the House of Commons yesterday, placing skills at the heart of the Government's agenda.**

The Government announced £65m for employers to allow employees paid leave to partake in education and training. The detail of the national roll out of employer training pilot measures is expected to come in the Skills White Paper, to be published next week.

Announcing a new goal to make available for the first time universal education or training until the age of 18, Brown proposed more money for young people to remain in training. He said: "To advance our objective that nine out of every ten 17 year olds stay on at school or join a vocational course, we will now offer those in full time education or unwaged training up to £75 a week in education maintenance allowances and children's benefits."

For teenagers who are both out of work and out of education, the Government will pilot "special transitional help" if the teenagers agree to return to training.

In relation to apprenticeships, Brown raised the bar even higher - pledging to have 300,000 individuals in Apprenticeships by 2008.

A new Union Learning Academy will be established, offering all levels of training for all workers and building on the scheme which has helped thousands of workers back into learning over the past 8 years.

For sport £27m was announced from the DCMS to set up a new National Sports Foundation to encourage young sports talent.

Stephen Studd, SkillsActive chief executive, said: "The continued focus on skills evidenced in this Budget demonstrates the Government is serious about redressing the skills gap and bringing UK productivity back to a competitive level. It is crucial we provide incentives for young people to remain in education and training so that they can achieve their potential and acquire the skills they need for rewarding careers. I look forward to reading the detail of the Skills White Paper when it is published next week. SkillsActive will work with employers in the active leisure and learning sector to embrace the challenge of developing universal education or training until the age of 18."

Several consultations were announced in the detail of the Budget report, indicating future policy directions. The secretaries of state for education and health will shortly announce plans to bring together by 2008 the inspection of children's services into the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

A consultation with employers is planned on the future of the Adult Learning Inspectorate, with the expectation that by 2008 it will also be part of this single inspectorate for education, children's services, and skills.

Lord Leitch's review of the future skills needs and priorities for the UK economy will report in spring 2006 on the future direction of skills policy in relation to the UK's skills needs. The review will act as an evidence base for the Government's skills ambitions for 2020.

Also announced yesterday were the Russell Commission's recommendations to Government for a new national framework on the future of youth volunteering. A Youth Green Paper is expected imminently which will include proposals for reforming youth support services. The Skills White Paper, which is likely to take the form of a progress report on the Government's skills strategy and flesh out proposals for employer training, is due to be published next week.

**-ENDS-**

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#### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. SkillsActive is the Sector Skills Council (SSC) for Sport and Recreation, Health and Fitness, Playwork, The Outdoors and the Caravan industries.
2. SkillsActive's mission statement is: "To ensure best quality, best business and best value within 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.
4. For more information about SkillsActive, please visit our website @ [www.skillsactive.com](http://www.skillsactive.com)
5. SkillsActive is currently developing a Sector Skills Agreement for the Active Leisure and Learning Sector which will define the Sector's skills needs and ultimately form an agreement between employers, Government and funding partners to shape the workforce for the next ten years.