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

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCE 14-19 REFORMS

The Government today published its long awaited white paper reforming 14-19 education.

Although promising to tackle the vocational: academic divide, basic skills, and the high drop out rate, the paper does not include Mike Tomlinson's proposals to replace A-Levels and GCSEs with one overarching diploma.

Welcoming the reforms, Stephen Studd, SkillsActive Chief Executive said: "The '14-19 Education and Skills' White Paper will go a long way towards better equipping young people for the world of work. The introduction of a minimum standard in functional maths, literacy and ICT is a direct response to the calls of employers who have been crying out for better basic skills in school leavers.

"I also welcome the strengthening of the vocational routeway for 14-19 year olds. I particularly welcome the important contribution the white paper can make in bringing the world of 14-19 education closer to employers in a structured and strategic way. SkillsActive is working with the sector to develop a vocational curriculum that responds to employer's needs and provides young people with a high quality programme leading to valued and rewarding jobs.

"The greater degree of choice afforded by the white paper means that in addition to existing learning programmes, 14-19 year olds will be able to pursue a vocational diploma or, if they are drawn to applied learning in a specific sector, an apprenticeship.

"Although disappointed to learn that the Government has not taken up Tomlinson's full recommendation for an overarching diploma that would place vocational and academic learning on an equal footing, SkillsActive looks forward to working with our partners to make the vocational diploma a success. Over time we would expect to broaden this qualification to combine vocational qualifications with mainstream academic qualifications."

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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
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.