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

SKILLSACTIVE KEY TO A HEALTHY NATION

SkillsActive has been identified as a key partner in delivering the Government's physical activity goals in a physical activity action plan published today.

The action plan details how the Government will establish cross departmental working to achieve the physical activity goals set out in its recent White Paper "Choosing Health".

According to the action plan, SkillsActive's work will be essential in "providing ongoing support to achieve sustainable behaviour change".

The report continues: "SkillsActive, the Sector Skills Council for Active Leisure and Learning will develop competencies and work with regional sports boards and other health relevant groups to develop capacity."

Working alongside Skills for Health, SkillsActive will help define the role of the new NHS-accredited health trainers which will have the skills and techniques to support individuals in changing their behaviour.

The action plan also recognises the contribution that outdoor play makes to healthy living and indicates that a more strategic approach to children's play is in the offing:

"DCMS is currently considering how to take forward work on children's play. This work is in its early stages but will include the establishment of a cross-departmental group to devise a strategic approach to play policy."

With regard to extended schools the action plan sets out the Government's expectation for all primary and secondary schools to develop as extended schools over time with an "Extended Schools Prospectus" expected this spring.

The key role of coaches in encouraging communities to become active was also highlighted, with details of Government investment to deliver a network of 45 coach development offices across England by 2005 with 3,000 full and part time community sports coaches by December 2006.

Welcoming "Choosing Activity: A physical activity action plan", Stephen Studd, SkillsActive Chief Executive said:

"I am delighted to see for the first time a truly cross departmental approach is being taken to address the country's physical activity needs. It is right that due attention has been given to physical activity in delivering preventative health goals and I am glad a separate action plan has been published for this element of the implementation of the Choosing Health White Paper.

“With the new role of NHS trainers, the commitment to deliver 3,000 community sports coaches by December 2006, the LEAP plans for targeted free swimming and the production of specific guidelines for children’s exercise referral, SkillsActive’s role is clear.

“We have to work with employers to develop the capacity in the sector. We need to ensure the necessary numbers of skilled professionals exist who are capable of delivering all these services and more.

“We relish this challenge and look forward to working with our partners to make this vision a reality.”

-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
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.