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YOUTH TRAINING ROLE FOR CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

SAYS EMPLOYMENT MINISTER

Chambers of Commerce have an important role in the Youth Training Scheme as managing agents where firms are too small to act as sponsors themselves, Mr David Waddington, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Employment, said today.

He told the Leicester and County Chamber of Commerce and Industry that the Government hoped they would assume responsibility for whole training programmes, linking together contributions from small firms who might not have sufficient capacity or administrative back up to undertake such programmes by themselves.

"The Youth Training Scheme will be a major departure from what has been the practice in this country. It will guarantee a full year's vocational training to every 16 year old school leaver who has not found a job. But it also aims to provide - but does not guarantee - 12 month courses of foundation training for 16 year olds already in employment and for unemployed 17 year old school leavers.

"When it comes into operation in September next year it will be catering for 460,000 youngsters," he said.

The Government had allocated £950 million for 1983-84 and £1.1 billion for 1984-85, and having given this huge financial commitment was now looking to other sectors of the community such as employers, unions, voluntary organisations and Chambers of Commerce, as well as the trainees themselves, to play their part. "Training is not a matter just for Government. It is primarily for companies and young people as their employees," said Mr Waddington.

"As potential sponsors, firms will be expected to provide a planned year of work experience and training both on and off the job which has to be approved by the Manpower Services Commission. The on-the-job training will be employer based providing up to 39 weeks of planned work experience for each trainee. The off-the-job element will be a minimum of 13 weeks provided by, for instance, in-house training by large employers or by the use of further education provided by the local college of further education."

Mr Waddington said that this foundation training for all young school leavers was only one part of the Government's New Training Initiative. Its two other objectives were the reform of apprentice training and the provision of better opportunities for adults to train and retrain.

It was extraordinary, he said, that the country had for years been content to muddle along with rigid, scrappy, unco-ordinated and simply inadequate training arrangements.

"It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the New Training Initiative. It is in fact the first time training policy has really been considered as a whole. For the first time the contributions of employers, trainees, education and training services, standard setting bodies, as well as the Government, are brought together.

"The primary responsibility for training must be with the employer," Mr Waddington said. "He must be in the best position to get the right training for the right person, in the right place and at the right time. The Government, although providing help at the margin, cannot and should not tell him how and when to train. But where the Government has a role is as a catalyst, getting change to happen - and big changes are on the way."