

Released: Monday 23rd May 2011

Cambridge gets ready to impress in city evaluation

A team of mystery shoppers and city assessors will be heading to Cambridge next month to rate the city's shopping experience.

The Location Model, designed by Skillsmart Retail, the Sector Skills Council for Retail, is being used to assess how well Cambridge performs in a number of different areas, from shop standards to town centre cleanliness.

The project is being funded by the National Skills Academy for Retail and supported by Love Cambridge, the City Centre Partnership for Cambridge.

As part of the project independent retailers have been given the chance to be mystery shopped. Trained market research professionals will visit each participating independent shop twice during June to judge how well they are performing in areas such as customer service, product knowledge and window display.

As well as this, 100 shoppers in the city centre will be interviewed to find out how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the service they receive in the city's shops.

Cambridge city centre itself will also be audited. This will focus on how easy it is for a stranger to shop in the city. Everything from car parking and street signage will be assessed - even the smallest of details such as how easy it is for shoppers to cross roads. The auditor will also assess the location of basic landmarks including the Post Office and library.

Emma Thornton, Head of Tourism and City Centre Management and the Love Cambridge Partnership said: "The Location Model is a great way for us to find out about Cambridge shoppers' experiences. Being a prime tourist location, the city attracts thousands of new visitors every year. It is vital these people get a great impression of Cambridge, and its businesses, to encourage them to return or tell friends about the city.

"Cambridge has many small retailers, popular with residents and tourists, which are essential to the local economy and must be supported. The Location Model will give our independent retailers the opportunity to get a real insight into how they are performing and what customers really think of their service. The feedback they will receive will really help them improve their businesses."

Once the information has been gathered, results will be used to see how the city can be developed.

The Location Model has already been successfully used in more than 80 locations in Great Britain, from Aberdeen to Wrexham.

Jayne Rexworthy, Head of the National Skills Academy for Retail said: "The Location Model will allow Cambridge's leaders to get a strategic overview of the city's retail offer, as well as giving individual retailers customer feedback.

"In these tough times independents must focus on how they can get customers into their shops and returning time after time. Once the Location Model results are announced, there will be numerous opportunities for retailers to take advantage of training, to ensure the improvements identified can be made."

Full results will be revealed at a special ceremony as part of The Love Cambridge AGM on Thursday 15th September 2011.

Independent businesses who would like to be part of this project should contact Becky Burrell, Love Cambridge Partnership Manager by **Friday 27th May** either by email at becky.burrell@love-cambridge.co.uk or by telephoning the Love Cambridge office on 01223 457198. Opportunities to be part of the Mystery Shop element of the project are limited, so please don't delay in registering your interest.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information contact Olivia White, Press and PR Officer for Skillsmart Retail, on 020 7462 5505 or at Olivia.white@skillsmartretail.com

Emma Thornton, Head of Love Cambridge on 01223 457464 or at emma.thornton@cambridge.gov.uk

Skillsmart Retail

Skillsmart Retail is the Sector Skills Council for Retail. Part-funded by Government and led by retailers, it aims to be the recognised authority on retailers' skills needs and priorities. Its mission is to drive a step change in skills levels in retail by:

- Making a compelling case for the formal recognition of retail skills
- Uniting retailers to simplify and improve access to the skills system
- Improving the quality of new recruits into the retail sector
- Raising the skills levels of the existing workforce in retail operations

www.skillsmartretail.com

National Skills Academy for Retail

The National Skills Academy for Retail is a wholly owned subsidiary of Skillsmart Retail and delivers skills solutions for retailers across the UK through a network of retail skills shops. These retail skills shops:

- Provide access to world-class skills and business support for retailers whatever their size, wherever they are located
- Lead the drive for professional, rewarding careers and skills development for everyone who works in retail
- Create a consistent national approach for training and skills in the UK's largest private sector employer
- Attract talented people into the sector

www.nsaforretail.com

Love Cambridge

Love Cambridge is the trading name for the Cambridge City Centre Partnership, an organisation which brings together a wide range of interests, across both the public and private sectors and encourages them to work together proactively on a range of projects to improve the city.

www.love-cambridge.co.uk