

## **Record number of entries to Apprenticeship Awards as Government urges more individuals to undertake Apprenticeships**

- East Midlands region contributes second largest number of finalists in 2008 Apprenticeship Awards
- 40 per cent increase in entries for fifth national Apprenticeship Awards as record numbers seek recognition for their commitment to Apprenticeships

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Today the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) announces record entries to the fifth national Apprenticeship Awards as the Government urges employers to offer Apprenticeship places. This year saw a forty per cent increase, with 1,400 entries from just over 1,000 last year.

Of the 24 finalists, four hail from the East Midlands region. There are two individual finalists, Advanced Apprentice Gemma Barrett and Apprentice David Khan, both from Nottinghamshire. There are also two employer finalists, Kingscliffe Day Nursery of Loughborough and Forum Computers of Lincoln.

The four apprentice categories acknowledge and celebrate apprentices' exceptional contributions to their workplaces, where entrants have made a real difference to the business they work in by exceeding expectations and delivering measurable benefits.

Nottinghamshire's Gemma Barrett completed an Advanced Apprenticeship in Hospitality and Supervision. But for Gemma, 26, the experience was not without its challenges. Changing work placements, family bereavements and the closure of her own business have all made for an extremely difficult few years for Gemma. She says: "It's not been an easy journey but I battled through, completed my Apprenticeship and have been doing

well ever since. Not only did I benefit from my Apprenticeship in terms of new skills and qualifications, but it also gave me the confidence to try my hand at entrepreneurship.”

The Awards are also designed to recognise those employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance, and the hard work and the commitment of individuals currently on, or who have recently completed an Apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships have played a significant role in Kingscliffe Day Nursery’s growing reputation. Manager and proprietor Alexis McConnachie comments: “Apprenticeships have assisted us in securing high quality individuals with a passion for childcare. Recruiting apprentices straight from our local schools has secured their future employment, training and development, and our future business growth and success.”

The four East Midlands representatives will join the other 20 finalists at the national Apprenticeship Awards ceremony on Thursday 10 July, to be held at the Royal Horticultural Hall in Central London.

David Lammy, Minister for Skills, commented:

"The expansion of the Apprenticeships programme is absolutely key to this Government's effort to equip people with the skills and qualifications that count - and will ensure employers have ready access to the enthusiastic and talented people they need to help them grow. I would not be where I am today without the help and support I got from the people I worked for – and it is these life skills that are the ethos of Apprenticeships. They are not just good for business: Apprenticeships are also about mentoring, dedication, application and skills. I am fortunate enough to meet apprentices from all walks of life, from engineering to floristry, IT to retail and I continue to be struck by their dedication and professionalism.

"I congratulate every employer and Apprentice who has taken part in these awards. They are testament to what can be achieved by putting skills centre stage, and I hope many more employers and young people will follow their example."

Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships at the LSC commented:

"The high volume and calibre of entries to this year's Awards are testimony to the real benefits Apprenticeships bring to both employers and individuals alike. The finalists demonstrate the outstanding contribution apprentices and businesses are making to raise the nation's skills levels and improve productivity and competitiveness.

"On behalf of the LSC, I would like to congratulate each and every finalist for their hard work, development and commitment to their Apprenticeship programmes. They have succeeded in raising their skills levels and I hope they prove to be positive role models to others who are considering becoming or hiring apprentices. I look forward to meeting each and every one of them."

**To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit [apprenticeships.org.uk](http://apprenticeships.org.uk) or call 08000**

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Notes to editors:

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

**The finalists in the individual categories are:**

#### Young Apprentice of the Year

- Rachel Freestone, Aerospace and Engineering - Coventry, West Midlands
- Luke Power, Sports Management - Greenwich, London
- Josh Pickering, Retail - Dorset, South West

#### Apprentice of the Year

- Sarah Abbott, Cookery - Mickleton, South West
- Claire Harrison, Pharmaceuticals - Skipton, Yorkshire and the Humber
- David Khan, Retail - Ainsley Estate, East Midlands

#### Advanced Apprentice of the Year

- Jacob Stimpson, Boat Building and Maintenance - Mannamead, South West
- Rachael Louise Hoyle, Aerospace and Engineering - Preston, North West
- Gemma Barrett, Hospitality - Mansfield, East Midlands

#### Personal Achiever of the Year

- Daisy Clark, Electrical - Millom, North West
- Mark Brookes, Teaching/Sport - Balsall Common, West Midlands
- Victoria Snook, Hair and Beauty - Preston, North West

#### **The employers in the employer categories are:**

##### Micro Employer of the Year (1-9 employees)

- Forum Computers, ICT, East Midlands
- Kingscliffe Day Nursery, Childcare, East Midlands
- Complete Computer Systems , ICT, Yorkshire and the Humber

##### Small Employer of the Year (10-49 employees)

- Ark Day Nursery, Childcare, Yorkshire and the Humber
- Arcana, Hair and Beauty, South East
- Delta International, Steeplejacks, North West

##### Medium Employer of the Year (50-249 employees)

- Arden Hotel and Leisure Club, Hotel and Leisure, West Midlands
- Defence Support Group, Vehicle Breakdown and Repair, South West
- Mark Wilkinson Furniture, Furniture Design and Manufacture, South West

##### Large Employer of the Year (250+ employees)

- British Gas, Energy, Staines, London
- Pendennis Shipyard, Super-Yacht, South West
- BT, ICT, London

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