

## **EAST MIDLANDS EMPLOYER RECOGNISED AT NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2007**

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has announced winners of the 2007 national Apprenticeship Awards. England's top apprentices and apprentice employers were recognised at a glittering ceremony in London last night, hosted by TV presenter Nick Knowles.

Amongst the winners was Derby-based engineering company Slack & Parr Ltd who took home Medium Employer of the Year Award for the second year running.

Now in their fourth year, the Awards are designed to recognise the hard work and commitment of young people currently on, or who have recently completed an Apprenticeship, and employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance. This year the awards attracted more than 1,000 entries.

### **Recognising England's top apprentices**

This year sees an outstanding performance from returning Medium Employer of the Year winner Slack & Parr. The Company says its Apprenticeship programme is now, more than ever, 'the life blood of the company' and has impressed the judges so much that it has been awarded first place in its category for the second year in a row.

Richard Hallsworth, Managing Director at Slack & Parr said: "It's wonderful to retain the Medium Employer of the Year Award, an unbelievable experience. It's a fantastic

endorsement of the work that goes into the training of our people. Now we will keep on doing what we're best at, training people for our business."

Awards presenter, Nick Knowles, was struck by the high calibre of entrants and said that he was a big advocate of Apprenticeships, for both young people and employers. He commented: "One thing I've learnt from my DIY SOS show is what a difference skilled professionals can make to your home. Apprentices turn up, take something on, and finish it - that's why Apprenticeships are so successful. I'm deeply impressed, and these Awards have been truly inspiring. It's been a privilege to see so many successful employers and apprentices here tonight."

Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships at the Learning and Skills Council said: "It really is awe-inspiring to witness the dedication, drive and enthusiasm of these apprentices - not only those who have achieved so much to win awards, but all apprentices around the country who are pursuing their goals."

"It is clear that to remain competitive, we need to ensure more people are learning useful skills and Apprenticeships have shown themselves to be very successful at making that happen, while giving people and businesses real opportunities to succeed. The Awards are now in their fourth year – a positive sign of the outstanding contribution individuals and UK businesses are making to raise skills levels and improve productivity and competitiveness nationally. This year's Awards entries have been first rate and the winners deserve recognition and huge respect."

Speaking at the event, Skills Minister Phil Hope MP said: "Thanks to dynamic young people, enlightened employers and a supportive delivery system, I see a bright future for Apprenticeships. They stimulate innovation, give businesses the skills they need and provide opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential. The Apprenticeship programme makes a real difference to all concerned and I'm delighted to see such great examples at the Awards tonight."

Sponsors for the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards are:

- City & Guilds (Premier Sponsor)
- QCA (Apprentice of the Year Category sponsor)
- BT Openreach (Advanced Apprentice of the Year Category Sponsor)
- British Gas (Personal Achiever of the Year Category Sponsor)
- BAE Systems (Young Apprentice of the Year Category Sponsor)
- Edexcel (Employer of the Year Category Sponsor)
- L'Oreal Professional; Bentley; Whitbread; O2; e-skillsUK; The Communications Network and Connexions (Gift, Bespoke and Table Sponsors)

Chris Humphries, Director General at City & Guilds, Premier Sponsor of the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards, said: "Congratulations to all of this year's winners and finalists. Our own research has shown how people who start their careers as apprentices often use their vocational background to great effect, becoming industry leaders or household names. Hopefully, this crop of apprentices will go on to emulate the success of some of their predecessors, such as Stella McCartney and Sir Terry Matthews."

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**Notes to editors:**

The Apprentice Category winners

**Young Apprentice of the Year**

Abigail Kewin, Tyne & Wear (Arts & Design)

Learning and Skills Council  
Cheylesmore House Quinton Road Coventry CV1 2WT  
T 0845 019 4170 F 024 7682 3675 [www.lsc.gov.uk](http://www.lsc.gov.uk)

**Apprentice of the Year**

Jonathon Pearson, Preston (Food & Drink Manufacture)

**Advanced Apprentice of the Year**

Gareth Moor, Morpeth, Northumberland (Electrical Engineering)

**Personal Achiever of the Year**

Zenel Lika, Atherstone, Warwickshire (Mechanical Engineering)

**The Employer Category Finalists****Micro Employer of the Year**

Blue Flame, Stockport

**Small Employer of the Year**

Farthings Veterinary Group, Horsham

**Medium Employer of the Year**

Slack & Parr Ltd, Kegworth

**Large Employer of the Year**

BT, London

**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.