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The Search is on for Apprentice and Employer of the Year 2008

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) begins its search for the East Midlands' top apprentices and employers with the launch of the Apprenticeship Awards 2008. Employers of all sizes and all sectors of industry across the region are being encouraged to enter the prestigious Awards.

The regional awards will culminate with a glamorous celebration event, as hundreds of apprentices and employers head to the East Midlands Conference Centre in Nottingham on 20th May 2008 for the largest regional celebration of young people, employers and learning providers involved in vocational learning.

The Apprenticeship Awards are held annually to celebrate the success of apprentices who have made a real difference to their future and to the organisation they work for. They also recognise the work of employers who are successfully tackling skills shortages to build their future workforce through Apprenticeships.

Speaking at the launch event in London, Skills Minister, David Lammy MP, said:
"Apprenticeships are integral to combating the nation's skills shortages. They stimulate innovation, give businesses the skills they need and provide opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential. The government has recently announced that there will be 500,000 new Apprenticeship places by 2020 so that even more employers and individuals can reap the benefits. The Apprenticeship programme makes a real difference to all

concerned, and I'm delighted to attend the fifth national Apprenticeship Awards launch tonight."

Verity Bullough, Regional Director, LSC East Midlands, said: "The Awards gets bigger and better every year. It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the achievements of young people and the dedication of businesses committed to work based learning. It's important that we recognise these talented individuals and the businesses investing in them, proving how successful and vital Apprenticeships are, not only to the success of their business but also the economic future of the region."

Employers are eligible to enter one of four categories depending on their company size; Micro (1-9 employees), Small (10-49 employees), Medium (50-249 employees) and Large (250+ employees). They are assessed on a number of criteria including implementation of the Apprenticeship programme, clear demonstration of the way Apprenticeships have benefited their business and the level of support provided to their apprentices.

In addition to the employer Awards, there are four categories open to apprentices - Apprentice of the Year, Advanced Apprentice of the Year, Young Apprentice of the Year and Personal Achiever of the Year.

To enter the Awards, or for more information, call 0845 058 0490 or email realsuccess@headstorm.co.uk. All completed applications must be made before 29 February 2008, with all the finalists attending the East Midlands awards ceremony. All regional winners will go forward to judging for the LSC's national Apprenticeship Awards 2008, with an awards ceremony on 10 July 2008 at the Royal Horticultural Halls in central London.

- Ends -

Notes to Editors: -

There are currently nearly a quarter of a million apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England alone, across 80 different sectors of industry.

Across the region there were 17,148 apprenticeships in 2006/07 and planned participation for 2007/08 is expected to rise to 21,931.

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. Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands

Skills campaign:

In July 2007, the LSC and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) launched the skills campaign. The campaign - Our future. It's in our hands - urges people to take control of their future by investing in skills. It is the most ambitious marketing and communications campaign of its kind, and over a three to five year period aims to bring about the cultural change needed to improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.