

Apprenticeship Week celebrates skills and business success

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Alan Sugar makes no secret of the value he places on apprentices for the continued success of his business. So much so, that he is the face of this year's Learning and Skills Council initiative, Apprenticeship Week (23 to 27 February).

An increasing number of employers around the country share Sir Alan's belief in apprentices with more than 130,000 businesses currently employing them – and 16,385 apprentices currently working and learning in the East of England. These figures are set to increase following an announcement by the Prime Minister Gordon Brown of a further £140m in funding for 35,000 new Apprenticeship places; urging businesses to invest in skills, even in the most difficult economic circumstances.

Apprenticeship Week will see a number of events taking place across the region to celebrate and support the substantial contribution that apprentices and their employers make to Britain's future success and to highlight the benefits to be gained by employers who invest in training.

Apprenticeship Week events in the East of England include:

- The NOVA Partnership, which aims to expand career opportunities for young people through work-based learning, has a High Street kiosk in Southend and

will be on hand to provide information on Apprenticeships on Tuesday 24, Thursday 26 and Saturday 28 between 11am – 2pm. Information, leaflets and goody bags will be available to those who visit the kiosk.

- Hertfordshire employers and Youth Connexions staff are invited to attend a 'Try It Out Day' at Ridgemon Training in Stevenage on Wednesday 25 February between 11am and 3pm. The event includes the opportunity for employers to try a trade of their choice plus the chance to take part in a conference discussion about the benefits of Apprenticeships for both employers and learners, and existing and future opportunities to get involved in Apprenticeships. For more information call 01438 842200.
- Bedfordshire and Luton businesses and business support services have also been invited to take part in Apprenticeship Mystery Tours – one around Bedfordshire and one around Luton – on Wednesday 25 February. Employers will board a luxury coach and visit several different training providers and businesses to learn more about apprentices can help businesses succeed. Demonstrations by apprentices will be included in the tour. Graham Earl, world champion boxer and former plumbing apprentice for Luton Borough Council will be one of the tour guides.
- During Apprenticeship Week the Opportunities Plus team from Connexions Norfolk will be visiting employers across the county to promote the benefits of Apprenticeships for businesses and to encourage employers to consider taking on more young people. For more information call Connexions on 01603 764370.
- On Wednesday 25th February West Suffolk College will host an open day event providing opportunities for young people to meet with prospective employers and to receive guidance from Connexions on getting on in life. The day will also include a variety of challenging and exciting hands on taster sessions for visitors to try out.

Apprenticeships are a blend of on and off the job training that give the apprentice the skills they need for a chosen career, whilst earning a wage. There are over 180 types of Apprenticeships available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy. For more information on Apprenticeships, go to www.apprenticeships.org.uk

The Learning and Skills Council is also urging employers and apprentices in the region to enter this year's prestigious East of England Apprenticeship Awards where the best in the region will compete for titles including Employer of the Year and Apprentice of the Year. The closing date for entries is 27 February 2009.

The East of England Apprenticeship Awards are held annually to celebrate apprentices who have made a real difference to their future and to the organisation they work for. They also reward employers who have tackled a skills shortage by engaging apprentices to ensure future success. Entry forms can be found at www.apprenticeship.org.uk/awards

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Notes to editors

For more media information please contact Dawn Humphreys at Tribe on 01603 417722 or email dawn@tribepr.com

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.