

## **THE SEARCH IS ON FOR APPRENTICE AND EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR 2008**

LSC launches fifth annual Apprenticeship Awards

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) begins its search for the nation's top apprentices and employers with the launch of the National Apprenticeship Awards 2008. Employers of all sizes and all sectors of industry across London are encouraged to enter the prestigious Awards, which take place in July 2008. Entries will also feed into the Skills for London Awards taking place in May 2008.

London performed exceptionally well in this year's national awards with no fewer than five finalists, two in the Large Employer of the Year category, with BT walking away with the title.

Dave Walsh, Head of BT Apprenticeships said: "Winning Large Employer of the Year was a great tribute to BT's investment in our apprentices. Our Apprenticeship programme is crucial for future proofing our business, delivering a clear return on investment. We will definitely be entering again this year."

Kesslers International, based in Stratford and Heathrow Airport Retail Academy were both Highly Commended, along with apprentices Lucy Rouillon from Edgware and Fiona Fay from Hoxton.

Now aged 23, Fiona has overcome many personal barriers to reach her current position as recruitment officer within Central Training Academy. Fiona has used her own experiences as an apprentice to help new learners in her company: "Being young, living locally and having completed an Apprenticeship myself meant students could relate to me, and felt able to approach me with their professional and personal problems."

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.”

David Hughes, Learning and Skills Council Regional Director London added:

“Apprenticeships are a more attractive option than ever before for those employers wanting to take control of the future of their business by investing in skills. Today, more than 130,000 employers across the country are using Apprenticeships to improve their business performance, whilst giving talented individuals the opportunity to achieve their goals.

“Entries to the Awards have increased year on year and we have received around 4,000 entries since the first Apprenticeship Awards in 2004. We are now calling on all apprentice employers across the country to enter our fifth national Awards.”

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.

The Awards Premier Sponsor for the fourth consecutive year is City & Guilds.

Chris Humphries, Director General of City & Guilds commented: "Any business can only be as good as the skills of its workforce, so it is great to see that the Apprenticeship Awards showcase the very best in staff training. As well as applauding individual and employer successes, these Awards are a testament to the real economic benefits apprentices can bring."

To enter the Awards, or for more information, visit [apprenticeships.org.uk/awards](http://apprenticeships.org.uk/awards) or call 0800 954 8896. Deadline for entries is 29 February 2008. The Skills for London Awards will be held on 8 May 2008 at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. Winners of the London Awards are automatically entered for the LSC National Apprenticeship Awards.

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#### **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.

#### The Employer Category winners 2007

##### **Micro Employer of the Year**

Blue Flame, Stockport

##### **Small Employer of the Year**

Farthings Veterinary Group, Horsham

##### **Medium Employer of the Year**

Slack and Parr Ltd, Kegworth

##### **Large Employer of the Year**

BT, London

#### The Apprentice Category winners 2007

##### **Apprentice of the Year**

Jonathon Pearson, Preston (Food & Drink Manufacture)

**Advanced Apprentice of the Year**

Gareth Moor, Morpeth, Northumberland (Electrical Engineering)

**Young Apprentice of the Year**

Abigail Kewin, Tyne & Wear (Arts & Design)

**Personal Achiever of the Year**

Zenel Lika, Atherstone, Warwickshire (Mechanical Engineering)

**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.

**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.

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