

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

- 40 per cent increase in entries for fifth national Apprenticeship Awards as record numbers seek recognition for their commitment to Apprenticeships
- Learning and Skills Council announces finalists

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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.

The Awards are 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.

The Government is taking good steps towards meeting this target with the latest figures showing that apprentice starts are up 16 per cent on the same period last year. This includes a strong increase in the number of over-25s starting Apprenticeships.

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."

The four Individual Award 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.

**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

Representatives from each company will join the rest of the finalists at the national Apprenticeship Awards ceremony on Thursday 10 July, to be held at the Royal Horticultural Hall in Central London.

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.”

Claire Harrison, 21, of Skipton, completed her Apprenticeship in Team Leading at North Lancs Training Group. She says; “My Apprenticeship has made my confidence soar. Before I started I had nothing to show for myself. I now understand that I can complete high-standard work and achieve qualifications to really help me get on in life.”

She is now a valued member of staff at Dales Pharmaceuticals and has had a strong and measurable impact on the company’s success as a result of her Apprenticeship. When she began as team leader in the packing department of the company, absenteeism was at 11 per cent. Within three months of Claire becoming team leader, absenteeism was reduced to 2 per cent and maintained that level for several months.

Claire continues: “With the skills and knowledge I gained through my Apprenticeship, I have helped the packing department to improve budgets and efficiencies. I have also kept absenteeism to below 3 per cent each month.”

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

**08000 150 400**

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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.

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**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

Premier Sponsor:

- City & Guilds

Category Sponsors:

- Edexcel
- BAE Systems
- BT/Rolls-Royce
- Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Bespoke Sponsors:

- Construction Skills
- Education Development International
- Bentley Motors Ltd.
- L'Oreal Professionnel

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