

SOAPS 'SHATTER' TEEN DREAMS

LSC issues ten 'Most Wanted' stars to return to learning

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is today calling on British soap operas to give their teenage characters more realistic career aspirations.

The British soap opera is famed for its realism yet the LSC believes soaps such as Eastenders and Coronation Street could improve their character's lives and show young people in a more realistic light, better reflecting young peoples' aspirations and career plans.

New research by the LSC shows that one in three (32 per cent) fame-hungry teenagers would like to be known for starting a successful business, with a further quarter (25 per cent) wanting their fame to spawn from academic achievement.

By 19, over 69 per cent of young people have the essential set of qualifications (five GCSEs A*-C or vocational equivalent) that employers say is the minimum they would expect when taking on a new worker. This figure is a far cry from the world of soaps, where many young people are stuck in dead-end jobs with few prospects – such as street cleaners, market traders, or bar workers.

In fact, there are so many soap characters that could be on the road to success with a little good advice, that the LSC has issued a top ten 'most wanted' targeting the top young characters that are selling themselves short.

Top of this list is Stacey Slater, who despite having many transferable skills, is stuck in her job on the market. By returning to college and getting the minimum set of qualifications such as a Level 2 diploma in fashion retail (which is equivalent to five good A*- C GCSEs), she could swap her stall for a designer boutique. She could even do this by studying full or part time at college or through an Apprenticeship in the work place or by attending the newly-established Fashion Retail Academy.

Julia Dowd, Director of Young People's Learning at the LSC said:

"Young people in soaps are role models, and if they remain in dead end jobs there is a danger that young people will accept this as the norm. Far too many soap characters have no career aspirations, and we need to at least show them moving towards a better life.

"Today we are suggesting to script writers the most appropriate careers for soap characters as a way to show young people the way out of dead end jobs or unemployment. While most young people have high aspirations, there are still thousands without a minimum set of qualifications which employers say they would need applicants to have, and we need the role models on TV to set a good example."

Suggested career routes for struggling soap characters vary from an environmental officer (Gus Smith), to becoming a police constable (Toni Daggart), yet all have the common theme of tapping into their skills and talents.

The LSC's Top Ten 'Most Wanted'

No.	Character	Soap	Employable traits	Suggested Career
1	Stacey Slater	Eastenders	Determined Strong work ethic Good with people	Buyer or Purchasing Officer
2	Fiz Brown	Coronation Street	Proficient with multi-tasking Good practical skills Creative	Fashion Designer or Pattern Cutter/ Grader
3	Jo Stiles	Emmerdale	Persuasive Good with technology Clerical skills	Web Designer or Senior PA
4	Gus Smith	Eastenders	Cares about his area Hard worker Altruistic	Environmental Officer
5	Toni Daggart	Emmerdale	Confident Good judge of character Persistent	Police constable
6	Jake Dean	Hollyoaks	Creative Good with hands Practical gardening experience	Landscape Gardener
7	Dawn Swann	Eastenders	Friendly and outgoing Good with people Presentable	Beauty therapist
8	Debbie Dingle	Emmerdale	Strong life experiences Rocky past Familiar with controversy	Counsellor
9	Micky Millar	Eastenders	People Skills Hard working attitude Good local knowledge	Estate Agent
10	Andy Sugden	Emmerdale	Headstrong Dependable Trustworthy	Farm Manager - run his farm more efficiently by

				studying business management
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For more information about staying on in education, young people can visit www.getsetforlife.org.uk or contact their local Connexions centre. To apply for Education Maintenance Allowance, young people can call 080 810 16 2 19 or visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema.

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For media enquiries please contact:

Simon Francis, Band and Brown Communications, T: 020 7419 7340, M: 07738487259, E: simon.francis@bbpr.com

Suzie Barrett, Band and Brown Communications, T: 0207 419 8618, M: 07813 203423, E: Suzie.Barrett@bbpr.com

Sarah Weston, Band and Brown Communications, T: 0207 419 7323, E: sarah.Weston@bbpr.com

Chris Blackwood, Band and Brown Communications, T: 0207 419 8635 E: chris.blackwood@bbpr.com

Notes to editors:

This press release applies to England only.

The Learning and Skills Council commissioned YouGov to independently question 412 employers online between 21st-24th July 2006.

Research on young people's aspirations comes from YouGov research commissioned by the LSC questioning 777 respondents aged between 16 and 19. The research was conducted online between 16th – 21st December 2005.

Information detailing the number of young people in England and Wales achieving their Level 2 qualifications is from SFR 06/2006 issued by the Department for Education and Skills in February 2006.

LSC

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational 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 by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

Apprenticeships

- There are currently 255,500 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 180 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce
- Apprenticeships provide 16-24 year-olds with a mixture of on and off-the-job training while they are being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated young people
- There are two levels of Apprenticeships:
 - 'Apprenticeships', equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
 - 'Advanced Apprenticeships', equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

EMA

All 16-year-olds in England from a household with an annual income of up to £30,000 who stay on at college or school are eligible for the EMA. The scheme allows payments of £10, £20 or £30 a week in return for a commitment to study. Additional benefits of up to £500 over two years are also available for meeting certain targets.

For advice and information on how to apply for the EMA call 080 810 16219 or visit the web-site www.direct.gov.uk/ema for application packs. For people with speech and hearing difficulties who use textphone, please call 0800 056 5344.

Separate EMA and Apprenticeship schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.