

North East Youngsters Praised

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North East footballing legend Peter Beardsley was the one handing out trophies last night (November 14th) when he joined hundreds of school children for the first ever regional Young Apprenticeship Dinner at the Gosforth Marriot Hotel.

The youngsters at the dinner and awards, aged 14 to 17, were all involved in the Young Apprenticeship Programme, which is funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) which enables young people to study and gain valuable work experience at the same time. The event, which was also be attended by North East employers, training providers and representatives from schools, colleges and other high profile agencies, was aimed at recognising the achievements of the young people and promoting the programme.

Those who attended - including a few potential sporting stars of the future - are either currently on the two year programme or completed it in September and former England and Newcastle player Beardsley, who is still involved with the club, presented recent graduates with trophies. Ashley Winter, Regional Chair of LSC North East, was also at the awards.

A total of 434 young people from across the region are currently involved in or have just completed the Young Apprenticeship Programme, which enables motivated and able students to study for vocational qualifications while continuing with their GCSEs. The programme was introduced in the region two years ago with the Tyne and Wear area being one of the first to be involved. When the programme started, students could study art and design, engineering or business administration but the programme has since been extended to include a further three subject areas – sports, science and motor engineering.

Chris Roberts, Regional Director, LSC North East, said: "The Young Apprenticeship Programme in the North East is currently oversubscribed, which is an indication of its success. It enables young people to have the best of both worlds – continue with their formal studies and get high quality work experience and worthwhile qualifications which will help them in the workplace. By taking part in this programme, young people can appreciate what it is like to be in a real job and can make an informed choice about what they want to do. The contribution that employers have made to the programme has been invaluable."

While the programme provides the opportunity for young people to gain the skills they need when they leave school, it is also about social development. The pupils on the programme will come into contact with new people, different learning environments, the practical demands of organising their time and getting to grips with life in the workplace. All of these things will help them develop and mature and gain the confidence to succeed in life.

Students from the following schools received the awards: St Joseph's, Hebburn, Emmanuel College, Gateshead, St Benet Biscop High School, Bedlington, Longbenton High School, St Thomas More, Gateshead, Kingsmeadow, Dunston, and Marden High School, Cullercoats. Pupils currently on the programme from the following schools also attended - Joseph Swan School and Thomas Hepburn Community School, both Gateshead, St Robert of Newminster Catholic School, Washington, Burnside Community High School and Churchill Community College, both Wallsend, St Cuthbert's High School, Newcastle upon Tyne, Norham Community Technology College, North Shields, John Spence School, North Tyneside, Ryton Comprehensive School, Jarrow School, Whitley Bay High School, Tanfield School, Stanley, and St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School, Lanchester. Sunderland University, the University of Northumbria and Newcastle University are also involved in the programme.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

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.

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CASE STUDY

Malanie Mains

Melanie Mains, a former pupil of Kingsmeadow School, Dunston, worked with Access Training and Stannah Lifts while she was studying for a Young Apprenticeship in Business Administration. She was presented with an award at last night's ceremony.

John Mowbray, Area Manager of Stannah Lifts, based in ???, tried to give Melanie, 17, from Gateshead, the widest experience possible with the company. Not only was she carrying out routine administration tasks, the oil in the machine of any business, but she became a real part of the team. It also happened that one of John's admin team was off sick for a while and Melanie was given the opportunity to take on extra tasks, working in the sales team. She was trained in the preparation of quotes for installations for customers and in no time at all, was able to prepare real quotes, which were sent out to real customers. Melanie became Access Training Young Apprentice of the Year. For this award, nominations were invited from employers for the Young Apprentice who had shown outstanding ability to adapt to the business environment. Melanie's nomination by John and his colleagues at Stannah stood out – Melanie had been so willing to learn, had absorbed new skills so well and had build such good relationships that she really did become a Stannah team member while she was with them.