

DARLINGTON COMPANY REWARDED FOR PIONEERING RECRUITMENT

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Darlington company BiB Insurance Ltd has been given a prestigious award in recognition of its successful drive to bring young people into the industry.

The company, which has been in operation in Darlington for more than 15 years, was presented with the Pioneering Recruitment award at the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) North East's Celebration of Learning and Skills (CoLaS) awards 2007, after establishing a highly successful training programme and increasing their intake of young people from the local sixth form college.

Two years ago BiB Insurance Ltd set up its own recruitment scheme in partnership with Darlington Sixth Form College, designed to highlight career opportunities in the insurance sector for school leavers. The scheme, suitably entitled 'Grow Your Own,' offered young people the chance spend a full year in each of the company's two divisions, giving them hands-on experience which they could use to compete a formal insurance certificate, verified by the Chartered Institute of Insurance.

The company now has two new members of staff who have gained full-time positions as a direct result of the training programme and are planning on continuing the initiative on a rolling basis, employing at least one new recruit every year.

BiB Insurance Ltd are also hoping to work in partnership with other local training providers to replicate their initiative across the North East.

The CoLaS awards are designed to honour and reward some of the North East's most outstanding individuals and employers, recognising their innovative and progressive approach to skills development and learning excellence. The Pioneering Recruitment award, sponsored by Barclays, was just one of ten up for grabs at the weekend's Oscar-style ceremony, where representatives from BiB Insurance Ltd, joined 1,000 other invited guests to enjoy an evening of regional recognition and local entertainment in the spectacular setting of the Sage, Gateshead.

Zanna Bewick, Human Resources Manager for BiB Insurance Ltd, said:

“Recruiting suitably skilled staff had becoming increasingly difficult for us, as insurance is still very much seen as something related to older people and is rarely promoted in schools as a viable career option. We wanted to raise awareness of how interesting a career Insurance can be and knew the only way to do this was to work directly with young people. Thankfully this has really paid off and we have found that by giving school leavers hands on experience of Insurance they are extremely keen to take up positions in the industry full-time. We are thrilled to have been honoured with this award from LSC North East and I believe it is testament to the hard-work of all our staff who have been great mentors for these young people.”

Chris Roberts, Regional Director, LSC North East, said: “BiB Insurance has been highly proactive in promoting the industry to young people and encouraging them to be more open minded about the career opportunities that are available to them. As a direct result they now have two fantastic employees, Craig and David, who

may otherwise have overlooked the Insurance sector or struggled to find specific work experience. This is what the CoLaS awards are all about and I wish to congratulate BiB for all its efforts. Long may it continue.”

For a full list of winners from the Celebration of Learning and Skills awards 2007, please visit www.lsc.gov.uk/colas07.

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Editor's notes:

Photo caption (see attached jpeg BiB): Representatives from award winner BiB Insurance Ltd (centre and right), with Stella McRae of sponsors Barclays (left).

Audio interviews with Outstanding Achiever Linda Gallon and CoLaS host Kirsty Gallacher are available in the LSC area of www.recognitionpr.co.uk. A video web report will be available from Monday. Please call (01325) 363436 for an access code.

To arrange an interview with any of the winners or representatives of the LSC North East, please contact Claire Buchan on (01325) 363436. Alternatively you can email claire.buchan@recognitionpr.co.uk

The full list of awards and winners is:

- Arts and Media (*sponsored by Arts Council England, North East*) - Michael Dollan (Gateshead)
- Business, Enterprise and I.T (*sponsored by Business Link North East*) – Asia Shameen (Newcastle)
- Construction, Manufacturing and Engineering (*sponsored by ConstructionSkills*) – Melissa McNaughton (Sunderland)
- Hospitality, Travel and Tourism (*sponsored by Assessment North East Ltd*) - Heather Bolam (Northumberland)
- Investment in Skills (*sponsored by Skills North East*) - Cleveland Potash (Loftus)
- Outstanding Achievement (*sponsored by UFI/LearnDirect*) – Linda Gallon (Wide Open)
- Pioneering Recruitment (*sponsored by Barclays*) – BiB Insurance Ltd (Darlington)
- Sports and Recreation (*sponsored by Newcastle College*) – Mick Hadfield (Hartlepool)
- Trade Union Life Long Learning (*sponsored by unionlearn*) – Kevin Phillips (Middlesbrough)
- Working in the Community (*sponsored by FE+*) – Giantminds (Newcastle)

Celebration of Learning and Skills Awards 2007, flying the flag for employers and individuals who are raising the standard of learning and skills development in the North East.

The Celebration of Learning and Skills is one of the most successful and prestigious award ceremonies in the North East. Currently in its second year, the 2007 ceremony will be the biggest

ever held in the region, when 1,000 guests will enjoy a spectacular ceremony at the iconic sage in Gateshead. The region's business leaders will join key employers, politicians, journalists, representatives from the education sector and the families and friends of the nominees for an evening of entertainment and recognition of achievement.

These awards are for employers and individuals who have reached the very pinnacle of innovative, progressive learning excellence. Open to anyone over the age of 14 at any level of education, and any size or type of employer in the North East, CoLaS aims to recognise and reward investment and success in skills development.

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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