

Darlington youngsters spin the wheel of fortune

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Young people are being given a lesson on how decisions, when it comes to learning, can send the wheel of fortune spinning in different directions when deciding on future careers.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) North East is currently running a month-long initiative in secondary schools across the region to encourage Year 11 students to stay in learning after the age of 16.

The roadshow team are running a lively game show spoof, based on the Wheel of Fortune, in schools throughout March. The performance includes interactive workshops and is aimed at spurring young people on to stay in learning whilst highlighting the financial support that may be available through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a weekly payment of up to £30 to help with the day-to-day costs of continuing in learning after age 16. The messages being delivered through the roadshow are important because research has shown that in order to compete in the global economy, the UK needs a highly skilled workforce and that there are more opportunities and better earning potential for those with qualifications and skills.

In the North East, in 2007, 73.2 per cent of young people had achieved their Level 2 qualification (5 A* to C GCSEs, an Apprenticeship, NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualification) by age 19, compared with 73.9 per cent nationally. In 2007, in Darlington, 68.9% of young people achieved a Level 2 @ 19 qualifications, an increase in the achievement level from 2006.

By achieving Level 2 qualifications young people could earn on average £4,000 per year more than someone without this level of qualification. Significantly, employers are increasingly demanding a minimum of a Level 2 equivalent qualification when recruiting young people into work.

The team visited Hurworth School Maths and Computing College, near Darlington, where they presented to 130 students.

Dean Judson, Head teacher of Hurworth School Maths and Computing College said: "Earning a good salary and landing an interesting, fulfilling job depend on achieving a decent set of qualifications.

"Decisions made in their teens can have a major impact for young people on how their lives shape up in the years ahead and they, with their parents or guardians, need to start planning now. The idea of today's event was to arm them with the necessary information to make informed decisions about their future career paths."

Chris Roberts, regional director, LSC North East, added "We know from research carried out that people's earning potential is closely linked to what qualifications they have achieved. Well-qualified and skilled staff are vital to the economy as employers strive to grow and develop their businesses in an ever more competitive marketplace. It is vitally important that we get the important learning messages over to young people from as early an age as possible, so that they

strive to become the highly skilled workforce of the future, with the right qualifications to become a success in whatever career path they choose.”

For more information about staying on in education, young people can contact their local Connexions centre, or visit www.connexions-direct.com or call 080 80013219. To apply for EMA, young people should visit www.direct.gov.uk/ema

ENDS

Picture caption:

Note 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.

A Level 2 qualification is not a qualification in itself, it is the name given to a certain level of achievement. The following qualifications are at level 2:

- 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C
- Apprenticeship
- NVQ Level 2
- VRQ Level 2
- Higher Diploma
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Qualifications at Level 3 such as an Advanced Apprenticeship, 2 A-Levels, an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent should usually be undertaken after gaining Level 2 qualifications.

Change to reflect new EMA info in Steps to SuccessThe Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 to help with the day-to-

day costs if continuing in learning after 16. The amount payable is dependant upon household income. The EMA is paid directly into the student's bank account. It is available for up to three years as long as criteria are met each year. EMA does not affect any other household benefits or earnings from the young person's part-time job. More information can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/ema

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