

LET'S MAKE IT ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR CHESHIRE

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the North West urges employers and apprentices to put Cheshire on the map once more as it launches its sixth annual Apprenticeship Awards.

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The search is on again to find the nation's top apprentices and apprentice employers, and this year Cheshire has a tough act to follow. In 2008 Craig Robinson was named North West Advanced Apprentice of the Year. Engineering apprentice Craig impressed the judges by undertaking a cost reduction project for his employer which helped the company save £30,000 while studying for vocational qualifications at West Cheshire College.

The LSC's national Apprenticeship Awards recognise the key role that apprentices play in today's world, and highlight employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance. Apprentices have a significant impact which spans the breadth of the economy from accountancy and engineering, to construction, creative industries and sport – and the Awards are designed to recognise this. Past winners include a ship builder, an IT firm, a veterinary practice and a nursery.

In 2008 around a quarter of all awards entrants came from the North West. This year the LSC in Cheshire wants local employers and apprentices to do even better, with more entrants and hopefully another national finalist or even winner. Shortlisted entrants will be honoured at the Cheshire Apprenticeship Awards, which could be the first step to regional and national glory.

There are three categories open to apprentices; Young Apprentice of the Year, Apprentice of the Year and Advanced Apprentice of the Year. The three individual award categories

acknowledge and celebrate apprentices' exceptional contributions to their workplaces, where they have made a real difference by exceeding expectations and delivering measurable results.

Employers of all sizes are eligible for the employer awards. They are assessed on a number of criteria including implementation of the Apprenticeship programme, clear demonstration of the way Apprenticeships have benefited their business and the level of support provided to their apprentices.

Launching the 2009 awards, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham urged the nation to get behind Apprenticeships:

“This government has rescued and expanded Apprenticeships. Ten years ago only 65,000 people started an Apprenticeship, by 2007/08 this number had increased almost three and a half times to 225,000.

“And we are determined to do more. In the Queen's speech we announced that we are going legislate so that every suitably qualified young person has an entitlement to an Apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are becoming a mainstream option for young people and adults who want to get on. And we hope that by the end of the next decade one in five young people will start an Apprenticeship.

“The LSC's annual awards are a fantastic opportunity for employers to showcase the best Apprenticeship schemes and celebrate the talents of their apprentices and I encourage employers to come forward and take part.”

LSC Regional Director for the North West John Korzeniewski added “Apprenticeships improve businesses and change lives, and it is only right that we honour these successes. If you are an apprentice or employ apprentices I urge you to enter for the 2009 awards, and look forward to celebrating another great year for North West apprentices.”

To enter the Awards, or for more information, visit apprenticeships.org.uk/awards or call 0800 954 8896. Deadline for entries is 27 February 2009. Regional Apprenticeship Awards category winners will automatically be entered into the national Apprenticeship Awards. The winners' event will be held on 16th July 2009 at Old Billingsgate Market, Central London.

Notes for Editors

The National Apprenticeship Awards

Around 200,000 apprentices start each year and more than 110,000 individuals completed their Apprenticeships in 2007. Over 130,000 businesses in England offer Apprenticeships.

In addition to the individual awards, there are five categories open to employers depending on their company size; Micro (1-9 employees), Small (10-49 employees), Medium (50-249 employees), Large (250-4999 employees) and the new Macro size category that will cover businesses with over 5000 employees.

Award Categories

Apprentice of the Year

This award acknowledges exceptional contributions to the workplace. Such an apprentice has exceeded expectations and delivered measurable benefits by, for example, making an important contribution to the development of a product or a special project.

Advanced Apprentice of the Year

This award rewards commitment to personal development and progression through learning, outstanding contributions in the workplace that have exceeded expectations as well as qualities which will inspire other apprentices to follow in their footsteps.

Young Apprentice of the Year

This award seeks to acknowledge exceptional achievements during the two-year Young Apprenticeship Programme. Judges are looking for young apprentices who have made the most of their time on the programme and who have demonstrated considerable progress both personally and in their studies.

National Apprentice 2008 Winners

Apprentice of the Year

Claire Harrison, North Yorkshire (Food Manufacture)

Advanced Apprentice of the Year

Rachel Hoyle, Lancashire (Engineering)

Young Apprentice of the Year

Luke Power, London (Health & Fitness)

Personal Achiever of the Year

Victoria Snook, Lancashire (Hairdressing)

National Employer of the Year 2008 Winners:

Micro Employer of the Year

Kingscliffe Day Nursery, Leicestershire

Small Employer of the Year

Arcana Hair and Beauty, Buckinghamshire

Medium Employer of the Year

Mark Wilkinson Ltd, Wiltshire

Large Employer of the Year

Pendennis Yachts, Cornwall

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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

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