

CHESHIRE APPRENTICE RECOGNISED AT NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2007

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Cheshire apprentice, Craig Lewis, has been recognised for his hard work and commitment at the 2007 national Apprenticeship Awards. The awards took place at a prestigious ceremony in London, hosted by TV presenter Nick Knowles.

Now in their fourth year, the Awards, managed by the Learning and Skills Council, are designed to recognise the hard work and commitment of young people currently on, or who have recently completed an Apprenticeship, and employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance. This year the awards attracted more than 1,000 entries.

Craig Lewis, highly commended in the Young Apprentice of the Year category, began his career in the hospitality sector working part-time at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Christleton, as part of his Young Apprenticeship. He was rapidly drawn into the sector getting involved in breakfast and lunch preparations, and event organising.

'My Young Apprenticeship has given me the skills and opportunity to get on the career ladder at 14, which would have been unlikely if I had been at school full-time,' comments Craig.

Currently finishing his GCSE's, Craig works most weekends and school holidays at the Hotel. He hopes to start at a caterer college in September to pursue his ambition of becoming a head chef in a large hotel within the next five years.

The Ramada Jarvis Hotel has offered Craig a full time position on completion of his qualifications and has also agreed to pay for Craig to attend college and continue with his education in September 2007.

Awards presenter, Nick Knowles, was struck by the high calibre of entrants and said that he was a big advocate of Apprenticeships, for both young people and employers. He commented: "One thing I've learnt from my DIY SOS show is what a difference skilled professionals can make to your home. Apprentices turn up, take something on, and finish it - that's why Apprenticeships are so successful. I'm deeply impressed, and these Awards have been truly inspiring. It's been a privilege to see so many successful employers and apprentices here tonight."

Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships at the Learning and Skills Council said: "It really is awe-inspiring to witness the dedication, drive and enthusiasm of these apprentices - not only those who have achieved so much to win awards, but all apprentices around the country who are pursuing their goals.

"It is clear that to remain competitive, we need to ensure more people are learning useful skills and Apprenticeships have shown themselves to be very successful at making that happen, while giving people and businesses real opportunities to succeed. The Awards are now in their fourth year – a positive sign of the outstanding contribution individuals and UK businesses are making to raise skills levels and improve productivity and competitiveness nationally. This year's Awards entries have been first rate and the winners deserve recognition and huge respect."

Speaking at the event, Skills Minister Phil Hope MP said: "Thanks to dynamic young people, enlightened employers and a supportive delivery system, I see a bright future for Apprenticeships. They stimulate innovation, give businesses the skills they need and provide opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential. The Apprenticeship programme makes a real difference to all concerned and I'm delighted to see such great examples at the Awards tonight."

Sponsors for the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards are:

- City & Guilds (Premier Sponsor)
- QCA (Apprentice of the Year Category sponsor)
- BT Openreach (Advanced Apprentice of the Year Category Sponsor)
- British Gas (Personal Achiever of the Year Category Sponsor)
- BAE Systems (Young Apprentice of the Year Category Sponsor)
- Edexcel (Employer of the Year Category Sponsor)
- L'Oreal Professional; Bentley; Whitbread; O2; e-skillsUK; The Communications Network and Connexions (Gift, Bespoke and Table Sponsors)

Ends

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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