

## **NORTH WEST APPRENTICE AND EMPLOYER RECOGNISED AT NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2007**

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has announced winners of the 2007 national Apprenticeship Awards. England's top apprentices and apprentice employers were recognised at a glittering ceremony in London last night, hosted by TV presenter Nick Knowles.

Amongst the winners were Jonathon Pearson from Preston and Blue Flame Engineering Ltd, based in Stockport.

Now in their fourth year, the Awards 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.

### **Recognising England's top apprentices and employers**

Jonathon Pearson, 22, an apprentice at Lancashire based Schwan's Consumer Brands, was honoured with the Apprentice of the Year title. Jonathon joined the company in 2001 and enrolled on an Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Manufacturing Operations. Due to his quick grasp of the role, Jonathon was promoted to deputy team leader within five months of completing his Apprenticeship - a massive accomplishment for someone of his age.

Commenting on his win, Jonathon said on the night: "It's brilliant. I never thought I would win. My Apprenticeship has given me so much - confidence, success, leadership, everything - and my company has supported me all the way."

Jonathon's employer, Mike Hyland, business improvement manager describes Jonathon as a role model to other employees.

Donna Coleman, scheme co-ordinator at North Lancs Training Group says: "Jonathon is a prime example of what one can achieve through an Apprenticeship. With the right guidance and a lot of hard work, individuals can succeed in their chosen sector."

Stuart Eakins from Blue Flame Engineering Ltd started Blue Flame as a small one-man semi retirement business two years ago, and hired an apprentice to benefit from his engineering experience. Since then the business has enjoyed stunning growth, three of his five-man team are apprentices with a stake in the business.

Commenting on his win he said: "It's terrific to have won the Micro Employer of the Year Award. We really believe that training apprentices is putting us on the right course. Our children are the future of society, and Apprenticeships are the future of business."

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)

Chris Humphries, Director General at City & Guilds, Premier Sponsor of the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards, said: “Congratulations to all of this year's winners and finalists. Our own research has shown how people who start their careers as apprentices often use their vocational background to great effect, becoming industry leaders or household

names. Hopefully, this crop of apprentices will go on to emulate the success of some of their predecessors, such as Stella McCartney and Sir Terry Matthews.”

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**Notes to editors:**

The Apprentice Category winners

**Young Apprentice of the Year**

Abigail Kewin, Tyne & Wear (Arts & Design)

**Apprentice of the Year**

Jonathon Pearson, Preston (Food & Drink Manufacture)

**Advanced Apprentice of the Year**

Gareth Moor, Morpeth, Northumberland (Electrical Engineering)

**Personal Achiever of the Year**

Zenel Lika, Atherstone, Warwickshire (Mechanical Engineering )

The Employer Category winners

**Micro Employer of the Year**

Blue Flame, Stockport

**Small Employer of the Year**

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Farthings Veterinary Group, Horsham

**Medium Employer of the Year**

Slack & Parr Ltd, Kegworth

**Large Employer of the Year**

BT, London

**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.