

## **NORTH WEST EMPLOYERS TURN TO APPRENTICES TO HELP THEIR BUSINESSES THROUGH THE DOWNTURN**

- *85 per cent of apprentice employers rely on their Apprenticeship programmes to give them the skilled workers they need for the future.*
- *89 per cent say Apprenticeships are likely to play a bigger part in their recruitment policy in the future.*

**Date of issue** 23 February 2009

**Publication number** NWR - 466

Businesses across the North West are continuing to feel the benefits of Apprenticeships, despite the difficult economic situation, according to research published today to celebrate Apprenticeship Week, which takes place 23 to 27 February 2009. The week celebrates the achievements of apprentices from a wide range of sectors, and highlights the business benefits of the Apprenticeship programme.

According to respondents to the Populus poll, these benefits include a better calibre of job applicant (83 per cent) and higher overall productivity within companies that employ apprentices (79 per cent). In addition 94 per cent of respondents agree that their organisation's involvement in the Apprenticeship programme means greater employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Apprenticeships Minister Lord Young, said: "This government has rescued Apprenticeships having more than trebled the number of people since 65,000 in 1997 to nearly a quarter of a million today, investing nearly £1 billion this year. The Prime Minister recently announced an extra £140 million to deliver 35,000 new Apprenticeship places.

"Today's findings show just how well regarded Apprenticeships are by employers. They are rightly valued across Britain as a means of providing employers with a well-trained workforce which help their business to succeed. They're about businesses investing in their future, whatever the economic climate.

“An Apprenticeship offers a great deal to both young people and adults, giving them an opportunity to gain practical skills, a well-regarded qualification and invaluable on the job experience while being paid.

“The careers open to people who want to do an Apprenticeship are growing all the time - from the more traditional like engineering to film production and IT. All of this shows just how important it is to bang the drum for Apprenticeships which is precisely what we are doing this week.”

In January the Prime Minister announced an additional 35,000 new Apprenticeship places across the public and private sectors backed by £140 million which builds on a commitment to increasing spending on apprentices in the next year to just under £1 billion.

Ministers have also acted to make it easier for employers to take on apprentices by slashing bureaucracy. From April 2009, the new National Apprenticeship Service will lead the expansion and improvement of the Apprenticeship programme. Since January 2009, prospective apprentices have been able to apply online for job vacancies advertised by employers.

Simon Waugh, Chief Executive of the new National Apprenticeship Service, said: “It is very encouraging to see that employers are really seeing the difference that apprentices can make to their business.

“Apprentices are ‘doers’ who make things happen and play a pivotal role in our economy. They will help businesses through these difficult times as well as helping to prepare for growth.”

**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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**Notes to editors:**

The survey was carried out by Populus and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council. Populus interviewed a sample of 500 respondents who were responsible for Apprenticeship programme recruitment in their companies by telephone between 5th January and 29th January 2009.

The Government has rescued Apprenticeships. In 1997, 65,000 people started an apprenticeship. In 2007/08, that number had risen to 225,000. Apprenticeship completion rates are now at an all-time high of 64 per cent, compared to 47 per cent in 2005/06.

**Background**

Apprenticeship Week activities will take place around the country and involve celebrities, politicians and apprentices. The week is an opportunity to promote the benefits that apprentices bring to businesses and the economy.

Apprenticeships are a blend of on and off the job training that gives the apprentice the skills they need for their chosen career whilst earning a wage.

More than 130,000 employers currently employ apprentices. There are over 180 types of Apprenticeships available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy.