

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR APPRENTICE AND EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR 2008

LSC launches fifth annual Apprenticeship Awards

Date of issue 4 December 2007
Publication number NWR-140

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has today begun its search for the nation's top apprentices and employers with the launch of the Apprenticeship Awards 2008. Employers of all sizes and from all sectors of industry across the North West are being encouraged to nominate their apprentices for the prestigious awards.

The Apprenticeship Awards are held annually to celebrate the success of apprentices who have made a real difference to their future and to the organisation they work for. They also recognise the work of employers who are successfully tackling skills shortages to build their future workforce through Apprenticeships.

The North West was well represented at the 2007 Awards with no fewer than five finalists, two of whom went on to win. Stockport based Blue Flame Engineering Ltd won Micro Employer of the Year Award, and Preston's Jonathon Pearson won in the Apprentice of the Year category. Accrington, Chester and Oldham were also represented at the Awards.

Blue Flame founder Stuart Eakins said: "Since I took on an apprentice, the business has enjoyed stunning growth. Today, three of my five man team are apprentices and are, therefore, the future of Blue Flame." After winning the award, Stuart commented: "It's terrific to have won the Micro Employer of the Year Award. Apprenticeships are the future of business."

Apprentice of the Year 2007 Jonathan Pearson quickly grasped his role at Schwan's Consumer Brands in Leyland, Lancashire. He was promoted to deputy team leader within five months of completing his Apprenticeship – a stunning achievement at the age of 22. Commenting on his award, Jonathan said: "It's brilliant. My Apprenticeship has given me so much – confidence, success, leadership – and my company has supported me all the way."

The Apprenticeship Awards are held annually to celebrate the success of apprentices who have made a real difference to their future and to the organisation they work for. They also recognise the work of employers who are successfully tackling skills shortages to build their future workforce through Apprenticeships.

Speaking at the launch event in London, Skills Minister, David Lammy MP, said: "Apprenticeships are integral to combating the nation's skills shortages. They stimulate innovation, give businesses the skills they need and provide opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential. The government has recently announced that there will be 500,000

new Apprenticeship places by 2020 so that even more employers and individuals can reap the benefits. The Apprenticeship programme makes a real difference to all concerned, and I'm delighted to attend the fifth national Apprenticeship Awards launch tonight."

John Korzeniewski, Regional Director of the LSC in the North West, added:
"Apprenticeships are a more attractive option than ever before for those employers wanting to take control of the future of their business by investing in skills. Today, more than 130,000 employers across the country are using Apprenticeships to improve their business performance, whilst giving talented individuals the opportunity to achieve their goals.

"Entries to the Awards have increased year on year and we have received around 4,000 entries since the first Apprenticeship Awards in 2004. We are now calling on all apprentice employers across the country to enter our fifth national Awards."

Employers are eligible to enter one of four categories depending on their company size; Micro (1-9 employees), Small (10-49 employees), Medium (50-249 employees) and Large (250+ employees). 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.

In addition to the employer Awards, there are four categories open to apprentices - Apprentice of the Year, Advanced Apprentice of the Year, Young Apprentice of the Year and Personal Achiever of the Year.

The Awards' premier sponsor for the fourth consecutive year is City & Guilds.

Chris Humphries, director-general of City & Guilds commented: "Any business can only be as good as the skills of its workforce, so it great to see that the Apprenticeship Awards showcase the very best in staff training. As well as applauding individual and employer successes, these Awards are testament to the real economic benefits apprentices can bring."

This year, for the first time, the LSC in the North West will also be hosting presentation evenings in the region's five local areas – Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. Further details will be announced in January.

To enter the Awards, or for more information, visit Apprenticeships.org.uk/awards or call 0800 954 8896. Deadline for entries is 29 February 2008. The Apprenticeship Awards National Final will be held on 10 July 2008 at the Royal Horticultural Halls in central London.

- Ends -

Notes to editors

There are currently nearly a quarter of a million apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England alone, across 80 different sectors of industry.

The Employer Category winners 2007

Micro Employer of the Year

Blue Flame, Stockport

Small Employer of the Year

Farthings Veterinary Group, Horsham

Medium Employer of the Year

Slack and Parr Ltd, Kegworth

Large Employer of the Year

BT, London

The Apprentice Category winners 2007

Apprentice of the Year

Jonathon Pearson, Preston (Food & Drink Manufacture)

Advanced Apprentice of the Year

Gareth Moor, Morpeth, Northumberland (Electrical Engineering)

Young Apprentice of the Year

Abigail Kewin, Tyne & Wear (Arts & Design)

Personal Achiever of the Year

Zenel Lika, Atherstone, Warwickshire (Mechanical Engineering)

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.

Skills campaign:

In July 2007, the LSC and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) launched the skills campaign. The campaign - Our future. It's in our hands - urges people to take control of their future by investing in skills. It is the most ambitious marketing and communications campaign of its kind, and over a three to five year period aims to bring about the cultural change needed to

improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further information contact Juliet Shaw at Resource Marketing on 01229 400210, e-mail Juliet@resourcemarketing.co.uk, or Debbie Newell at LSC on 0161 261 0434, e-mail Deborah.newell@lsc.gov.uk