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South West Apprentices span the region

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If every person in the South West who started an Apprenticeship this year stood arm-to-arm, they would stretch all the way from Tintagel to Dartmouth National Park according to the National Apprenticeship Service which is today launching its seventh annual Apprenticeship Awards.

More than 27,000 people in the South West began an Apprenticeship in 2009 – an increase of 42% over the last three years. The Awards celebrate these starters and all of England's apprentices, along with the businesses that employ them.

John Chudley, South West Director of the National Apprenticeship Service, said: "The Apprenticeship Awards recognise the achievements of individuals engaged in training and the organisations that invest in them.

"Apprentices provide a real boost to Britain's economy, helping businesses secure a supply of people with the skills and qualities often not available on the external job market. They bring fresh ideas and innovation to organisations and help to increase staff retention."

Research shows that employers who hire apprentices can recoup their investment in as little as 18 months, with apprentices continuing to make a positive financial contribution to a business if retained. Trade sectors such as hospitality, retail,

To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call 08000 150 600

National Apprenticeship Service

construction and business administration generally have the shortest payback period, with engineering and social care taking no more than four years.

Kevin Brennan, Minister for Further Education, Skills, Apprenticeships and Consumer Affairs, said: "I'm delighted to support the annual Apprenticeship Awards and have seen first-hand the benefits that apprentices bring to businesses of all different sectors and sizes.

"Let's reward apprentice employers and young people in the South West for their hard work and commitment and I'd encourage anyone who knows an apprentice or organisation that employs one to make a nomination."

Iain Wright, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for 14-19 Reform and Apprenticeships said:

"The Awards highlight apprentice success stories from all over the country. I congratulate these inspirational apprentices who are making such a difference in the organisations where they work.

"Apprenticeships are an excellent option for young people and these award winners demonstrate the hugely positive impact apprentices can have on employers and their communities."

Sinead Smith, 19 and from Podsmead Gloucester, won 2009's Apprentice of the Year Award. After taking an Apprenticeship in Business Administration with Gloucester College, she has become a key member of the Admissions and Funds Department where she even found the confidence to run the late applications programme last summer. She said: "I really enjoyed the opportunity to earn whilst I learnt! My Apprenticeship helped build my confidence and has made me far more independent than I would have been if I had spent the last two years in a classroom."

Sinead is a real advocate of Apprenticeships, she represents apprentices at the college's Apprenticeship Business Breakfast talking to employers about the benefits of employing apprentices. "I think the Apprenticeship Awards are a great way to raise awareness of the advantages and benefits Apprenticeships offer to young people like myself," she added.

To nominate an employer or apprentice in the South West for an Award, go to apprenticeships.org.uk/Awards or call 08000 150 600 to find out more about Apprenticeships. Entries close on 27 February 2010.

The South West Apprenticeship winners will be announced at the South West Skills Awards which will be held in June 2010. Regional winners will go onto the national ceremony in July 2010.

-ENDS-

For more information, case studies or interview opportunities, contact Sue Bradbury Tel: 01872 863863

Notes to editors:

Fun facts -

27,000 people equates to 29 miles of people if they stood arm-to-arm.

27,000 is just less than the population of Chippenham in Wiltshire (estimated at 28,065 in the 2001 census).

1. National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)

The NAS was announced in January 2008 and officially launched in April 2009. Reporting to the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), the service will drive forward the Government's ambition for Apprenticeships. The service aims to bring about a significant growth in the number of employers offering Apprenticeships.

The NAS will assume total responsibility for the delivery of Apprenticeships that includes: Employer Services; Learner Services; and a web-based vacancy matching system. This online system enables individuals to search and apply for live vacancies and allows employers, and their training providers to advertise their vacancies to a wide range of interested applicants.

The service has ultimate accountability for the national delivery of targets and co-ordination of the funding for Apprenticeship places. It will act to overcome barriers to the growth of the programme and assume responsibility for promoting Apprenticeships and their value to employers, learners and the country as a whole.

2. Apprentice figures reflect the provisional number of Apprenticeship Framework starts from 1 August 2008 – 30 April 2009. They are based on the home postcode of the learner and rounded to the nearest hundred.

3. A telephone survey covering 102 employers was published in November 2008 by the University Of Warwick Institute for Employment research. A net present value of an apprentice was calculated by summing the future benefits derived by the business from employing an ex-apprentice and deducting the net costs of training.

4. The 2010 Apprenticeship Awards celebrate the achievements of apprentices and employers from all over England. Nominations begin on 2 December 2009 and close on 27 February 2010. The regional winners will be announced in June and invited to a national final in July.

Nomination categories are:

- Young Apprentice of the Year
- Apprentice of the Year
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year
- Micro Employer of the Year
- Small Employer of the Year
- Medium Employer of the Year
- Large Employer of the Year
- Macro Employer of the Year