

SOMERSET SKILLS STARS SHINE AT LSC AWARDS

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Somerset skills stars lit up the South West Skills Awards with one winner and three highly commended finalists who received their awards from TV's Ben Fogle.

Described as the 'Learning Oscars', the prestigious ceremony, which was held on April 24, was organised and funded by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) South West to celebrate the exceptional achievements of individuals and organisations throughout the region.

Crosby Casey from Glastonbury took the top award in the 'Learning Against the Odds' category. Crosby suffered severe medical problems throughout his course at Strode College but embarked on a degree at Bath Spa University where he went on to excel in his learning and achieve top marks in his English Literature course.

Phillipa Piper, his tutor at Strode College said: "He has been awarded 'Firsts' at university and he told me his English Lecturer said that one piece had earned the highest grade she had ever awarded!"

Natalie Lochrie from Taunton was highly commended in the 'Learning Against the Odds' category thanks to her commitment to learning at Bridgwater College. By introducing innovative training methods to his kitchen team, Lee Millard, Head Chef at the Taunton Holiday Inn was highly commended in the 'Inspiring Others to Learn' category.

Notably, Sarah Knight, an apprentice at Augusta Westland in Yeovil was highly commended in three categories; 'Learning Against the Odds', 'Personal Achiever of the Year' and 'Advanced Apprentice of the Year'.

Malcolm Gillespie, Regional Director, LSC South West said: “Last night’s ceremony was a fantastic celebration of learning and development across the South West. We received a record number of entries, so our Somerset winners and finalists can be very proud of their achievements.”

“The awards enabled the LSC to showcase the outstanding contribution that individuals and businesses are making to raise skill levels and improve productivity and competitiveness throughout the region.”

Intrepid explorer and TV presenter Ben Fogle presented the Somerset winners and finalists with their awards following his motivational speech to 170 south west apprentices, adult learners and employers at Sandy Park Stadium in Exeter.

Ends

Note to Editors:

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 more information visit: www.lsc.gov.uk/southwest

For more information, photos or to arrange an interview with a winner or finalist please contact Lindsay, Rebecca or Jenny on 0117 907 3400.

Awards categories, winners and highly commended finalists

- **South Advanced Apprentice of the Year:**

Winner - Jacob Stimpson (Plymouth)

Highly Commended – Sarah Knight (Yeovil) and Kirsty Macdonald (Plymouth)

- **South West Personal Achiever of the Year:**

Winner - Mathilde Heather (Bath)

Highly Commended – Ben Butler (Newquay) and Sarah Knight (Yeovil)

- **Inspiring Others to Learn:**

Winner - Steve Murphy (Plymouth)

Highly Commended – Sean Duff (Plymouth) and Lee Millard (Taunton)

- **Learning Against the Odds:**

Winner - Crosby Casey (Glastonbury)

Highly Commended – Sarah Knight (Yeovil) and Natalie Catherine Lochrie (Taunton)