Learning and Skills Council announces winners of Apprenticeship Awards 2008

- Female apprentices dominate for the first time since awards began, with three out of the four coveted awards going to women
- Claire Harrison, Rachael Hoyle and Victoria Snook join Luke Power receiving Awards

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) today announces the winners of the national Apprenticeship Awards 2008. Now in their fifth year, the Awards are designed to recognise the hard work and commitment of people who are currently undertaking, or who have recently completed, an Apprenticeship, as well as the employers who are successfully using Apprenticeships to improve business performance.

For the first time since the celebration began, 75 per cent of the apprentice winners are women, as Claire Harrison, Rachael Hoyle and Victoria Snook are recognised, along with Luke Power, as winners in their respective categories this year.

Today’s results are all the more surprising as two of the young women who have received the awards also work in sectors that are traditionally dominated by men: aerospace engineering and pharmaceuticals.

The four apprentice award categories seek to celebrate apprentices’ commitment to developing their skills and experience through Apprenticeships. Apprentices were judged on criteria that include their commitment to training, the range and diversity of their experience in their chosen field, their achievements within the workplace and demonstration of the way Apprenticeships have benefited their lives.

This year’s Apprenticeship Awards attracted a record number of entries, with almost 1,400 individuals and companies all over England vying to be named Apprentice or Employer of the Year at tonight’s ceremony. Representatives from the various employers joined the rest of the finalists at the Royal Horticultural Hall in Central London, where TV star Amanda Holden presented the Awards (Thursday 10 July).

Amanda Holden says: “I’m so happy to have been involved in this year’s Apprenticeship Awards; they’ve shown me that Apprenticeships can help us unlock
England’s talent and having judged various people’s ‘talent’ for a while now, I can say I’m truly honoured to have been part of this particular ceremony.

“On a personal level I’m also extremely proud to see three young, independent women doing so well in their respective fields; they really have shown that it’s not always a man’s world out there! I just hope that everyone sees tonight’s winners as shining examples of how young people can have a positive influence on this country”

John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, says: “For many people, skills and learning are the key to improving their lives – whether getting into and on at work, improving their job prospects or simply putting more money into their pockets.

“Apprenticeships have been ‘key’ in making that happen over recent years, but we need to go even further. Our aim must be to raise skill levels and in turn boost the job prospects of people in the UK and Apprenticeships are vital if we are to give everyone the skills they need to succeed in the global economy.”

Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships, Learning and Skills Council says: “Once again it is so inspiring to witness the dedication, drive and enthusiasm of these apprentices - not only our winners, whom we recognise tonight, but all apprentices around the country who are pursuing their chosen careers.

“It is clear that to remain competitive, the UK needs to ensure more people are learning useful skills and Apprenticeships have shown themselves to be key in making that happen, while giving people and businesses real opportunities to succeed. Thanks to dynamic young people, enlightened employers and a supportive delivery system, Apprenticeships have a really bright future. The Apprenticeship programme makes a real difference to all concerned and I'm delighted to see such great examples at the Awards tonight.”

Rachael Hoyle, who clinched her Advanced Apprentice of the Year title following her Advanced Apprenticeship in Aerospace Engineering, says her Apprenticeship helped solidify her career in an industry traditionally dominated by men.

Rachael says: “If I’m honest, I didn’t always want to be an engineer or work with aircrafts, and as my schooling drew to a close, I felt so unsure of what the future
held. But when I looked into Apprenticeships alongside other possible courses, Apprenticeships really appealed to me as it would mean beginning a career while learning from people who are experts in their own right. I felt I could get involved in real work while applying my favourite subjects, like physics and maths, and continuing to learn.”

The Apprentice Award 2008 winners are as follows:

**Young Apprentice of the Year:** Luke Power, Sports Management, London
Highly Commended: Rachel Freestone, Aerospace and Engineering, Coventry, West Midlands
Highly Commended: Josh Pickering, Retail, Dorset, South West

**Apprentice of the Year:** Claire Harrison, Pharmaceuticals, Skipton, Yorkshire & Humberside
Highly Commended: Sarah Abbott, Cookery, Mickleton, West Midlands
Highly Commended: David Khan, Retail, Nottinghamshire, East Midlands

**Advanced Apprentice of the Year:** Rachael Hoyle, Aerospace and Engineering, Preston, North West
Highly Commended: Jacob Stimpson, Boat Building and Maintenance, Plymouth, South West
Highly Commended: Gemma Barrett, Hospitality, Mansfield, East Midlands

**Personal Achiever of the Year:** Victoria Snook, Hair and Beauty, Preston, North West
Highly Commended: Daisy Clark, Electrical, Cumbria, North West
Highly Commended: Mark Brookes, Teaching/Sport, Balsall Common, West Midlands

To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call 08000 150 400.

- Ends -

Notes 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.

Winners in the employer categories are announced as follows:

The Employer Category Results

Large Employer of the Year (250+ employees)
Winner - Pendennis Shipyard, Super-Yacht builders based in Falmouth, Cornwall
Highly Commended – British Gas, Energy, based in Staines near London
Highly Commended – BT, ICT, based in London

Medium Employer of the Year (50 – 249 employees)
Winner - Mark Wilkinson Furniture, based in Bromham, Wiltshire
Highly Commended – Arden Hotel and Leisure Club, Hotel and Leisure, based in Solihull, West Midlands
Highly Commended – Defence Support Group, Vehicle Breakdown and Repair, based in Warminster, South West

Small Employer of the Year (10 – 49 employees)
Winner - Arcana Hair and Beauty, based in Milton Keynes
Highly Commended – Ark Day Nursery, Childcare, based in Halifax, West Yorkshire
Highly Commended – Delta International, Steeplejacks, based in Oldham, North West

Micro Employer of the Year (1 – 9 employees)
Winner - Kingscliffe Day Nursery, based in Loughborough, Leicestershire
Highly Commended – Forum Computers, ICT, based in Lincoln, East Midlands
Highly Commended – Complete Computer Systems, ICT, based in Leeds, Yorkshire and the Humber

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