THE SEARCH IS ON FOR APPRENTICE EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR
LSC launches fifth annual Apprenticeship Awards

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The search is on for the nation’s top apprentice employers as the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) launches its fifth annual Apprenticeship Awards. Employers of all sizes and from all sectors of industry are encouraged to enter the prestigious national awards.

Speaking at the event, 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.”

The Awards are held annually to celebrate the success of apprentices who have made a real difference to their own 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.

Chris Banks, Chair of the Learning and Skills Council 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.”

The Awards highlight the popularity of Apprenticeships amongst employers of all sizes, with past winners including BAE Systems and British Gas in the Large Employer category, with the telecoms giant, BT, winning in 2007. Smaller firms also triumphed when electrical engineering company Beere Electrical Services Ltd was crowned Micro Employer of the Year 2006.

Talking of their win, Dave Walsh, Head of BT Apprenticeships commented: “Winning Large Employer of the Year 2007 was a great tribute to BT’s investment in our
apprentices. Our Apprenticeship programme is crucial for future proofing our business, delivering a clear return on investment. We will definitely be entering again this year.”

Employers are eligible to enter for 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 is 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 a testament to the real economic benefits apprentices can bring.”

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 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.

Employer of the Year 2007 Winners:

Micro Employer of the Year
Blue Flame Engineering Ltd, 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
Apprentice 2007 Winners

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
Abbigail Kewin, Tyne & Wear (Arts & Design)

Personal Achiever of the Year
Zenel Lika, Atherstone, Warwickshire (Mechanical Engineering)

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.

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.