LSC launches search for Apprenticeship Employer of the Year

Date of issue 7 December 2007
Publication number 398
Embargo until 10.30am 7 December 2007

As the Leitch Review of UK Skills published this week (5 December) recommended doubling the number of apprentices to 500,000 by 2020, it is fitting that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) today launches its search to find the Apprenticeship Employer of the Year 2007.

Now in their fourth year, the Apprenticeship Awards are designed to recognise and applaud employers who are exceptionally committed to developing the skills of their workforce through excellent Apprentice training programmes, and apprentices who have exceeded their employers’ expectations by producing exceptional and measurable benefits or have overcome personal difficulties to succeed through their Apprenticeship.

Minister for Skills, Phil Hope MP, will officially open the awards for entries today by unveiling a film and photography exhibition at the prestigious Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) in London. ‘Apprentices: Today’s Future’ will showcase the country’s finest talent through photography and film to illustrate the contribution apprentices are making across the country.

Skills shortages continue to have a negative impact on productivity and competitiveness in the UK, with employers considering these a bigger threat to performance than soaring oil prices and declining consumer spending¹. Designed by employers to meet their specific needs, Apprenticeships provide a real solution to addressing shortages within their

¹ NESS 2005
organisations, whilst delivering tangible benefits such as increased productivity, profitability, staff retention and lower training costs.

**Stephen Gardner, Director of Apprenticeships at the Learning and Skills Council commented:** “Today’s exhibition is the perfect way to launch the 2007 Apprenticeship Awards as it illustrates just how far vocational education has come since the days when apprentices ‘belonged’ to their master. Today’s apprentices are valued members of the workforce whose skills, effort and ideas are contributing directly to their employers’ success.

“Recognising excellence is vital if investment in skills is seen as benefiting the nation. The calibre of entrants last year, 1100 in total, reinforces that Apprenticeships are now viewed as a highly respected alternative route to a successful career by young people and employers alike. The Awards provide us with the opportunity to recognise the outstanding contribution apprentices and employers are making, raising our country’s skills levels and supporting our ability to compete on a global stage.”

**On launching the awards, Minister for Skills, Phil Hope MP said:** “The Awards are a wonderful opportunity to celebrate what young people around the country are achieving every day. I congratulate all of last year’s winners every one of whom achieved not just a qualification but have shown that when you put your mind to it you can achieve anything you want. Apprentices who complete their training successfully are likely to earn more, stay in their jobs longer and also make the successful leap into management.

“Apprenticeships are a huge success story, with numbers of apprentices up three and a half times since 1997, from 75,000 to over a quarter of a million today. This Government wants to go further so that in future all school leavers who meet the criteria will be entitled to an Apprenticeship place. Apprentices are their own best advertisement and these Awards will continue to showcase brilliant examples of young people who have developed the skills they and their employers need.”

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.

There are three apprentice categories, to recognise those whose contribution to the workplace has exceeded their employer’s expectations by producing exceptional and measurable benefits; Apprentice of the Year, Advanced Apprentice of the Year and Young Apprentice of the Year. A Personal Achievement award will also be awarded to an apprentice who has successfully overcome a barrier or obstacle – personally or in the workplace – to achieve their goals and exceed expectations.

There are currently over 259,000 apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England alone, across 80 different sectors of industry. Apprenticeships are also increasingly being used by young people as a stepping stone to a university degree, often part time and supported by the employer whilst the employee continues to work.

To enter the Awards, or for more information, visit call the Awards team on 0800 019 2083. Deadline for entries is Friday 23rd February 2007.

- ends -

For further media information contact:

Hill and Knowltone
Poppy Nagra
T. 020 7413 3021 / M. 07956 169209
E. poppy.nagra@hillandknowlton.com
alexandra.davies@hillandknowlton.com

Learning and Skills Council
Kirstin Rowan
T. 020 7904 0908
E. kirstin.rowan@lsc.gov.uk

About the Learning and Skills Council Apprenticeships programme:

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funds and promotes Apprenticeships. The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive.

There are currently 259,000 young people aged 16-24 undertaking an Apprenticeship. They can choose from over 200 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce

There are two levels of Apprenticeships:

- ‘Apprenticeships’, equivalent to GCSE level, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 2; key skills and in some cases a technical certificate
‘Advanced Apprenticeships’, equivalent to A-levels, incorporate a National Vocational Qualification to Level 3, key skills and a technical certificate

About the Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for planning and funding high-quality vocational 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 by 2010, young people and adults in England have the knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. Established in 2001, we work nationally, regionally and locally from a network of offices across the country.

The Disability Equality Scheme will be available via the LSC website www.lsc.gov.uk.

The Disability Discrimination Act was introduced in 2005 and has placed a general duty upon organisations such as the LSC to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people, be they employee or service user.

The Disability Equality Duty is being introduced across the public sector in December 2006 and is a legal duty for organisations to actively promote equality of opportunity for disabled staff, students and service users.

The LSC is required to carry out its functions with ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful disability discrimination and disability-related harassment;
- promote equality of opportunity for disabled people;
- promote positive attitudes to disabled people; and
- encourage disabled people to participate in public life.

The LSC is additionally required to meet specific duties, to develop and publish a Disability Equality Scheme (DES) and associated SMART Action Plan with the involvement of disabled people (active participation rather than just consultation).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
All public enquiries please contact:
LSC Helpdesk 0870 900 6800

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES:
Ann Gill 02476 82 3515 ann.s.gill@lsc.gov.uk
Emily Towers 02476 82 5793 emily.towers@lsc.gov.uk
Jo Swift 0207 331 5476 jo.swift@uk.cohnwolfe.com