Hundreds of employers have given Apprenticeships the thumbs up in a new survey in which 81 per cent of businesses said apprentices helped to generate higher overall productivity.

The research, carried out to mark Apprenticeship Week this week (February 23 to 27), also reveals one in five businesses questioned are hiring more apprentices to help them through tougher times with 22 per cent actively recruiting.

The survey’s other key findings include:

- Two-thirds of employers believing their apprentices help them to be more competitive in their businesses (66 per cent);
- more than 82 per cent saying they relied on their Apprenticeship programme to give them the skilled workers they need for the future; and
- 92 per cent of employers said Apprenticeships resulted in greater employee motivation and job satisfaction

Apprenticeships Minister Lord Young, said:

“This Government has rescued Apprenticeships having more than trebled the number of people since 65,000 in 1997 to nearly a quarter of a million today, investing nearly £1 billion this year. The Prime Minister recently announced an extra £140 million to deliver 35,000 new Apprenticeship places.

“Today’s findings show just how well regarded Apprenticeships are by employers. They are rightly valued across Britain as a means of providing employers with a well-trained workforce which help their business to succeed. They’re about businesses investing in their future, whatever the economic climate.

“An Apprenticeship offers a great deal to both young people and adults, giving them an opportunity to gain practical skills, a well-regarded qualification and invaluable on the job experience while being paid.

“The careers open to people who want to do an Apprenticeship are growing all the time - from the more traditional like engineering to film production and IT. All of this shows just how important it is to bang the drum for Apprenticeships which is precisely what we are doing this week."

In January the Prime Minister announced an additional 35,000 new Apprenticeship places across the public and private sectors backed by £140 million which builds on a commitment to increasing spending on apprentices in the next year to just under £1billion. Ministers have also acted to make it easier for employers to take on apprentices by slashing bureaucracy. From April 2009, the new National
Apprenticeship Service will lead the expansion and improvement of the Apprenticeship programme. Since January 2009, prospective apprentices have been able to apply online for job vacancies advertised by employers.

Simon Waugh, Chief Executive of the new National Apprenticeship Service, said:

“It is very encouraging to see that employers are really seeing the difference that apprentices can make to their business.

“Apprentices are ‘doers’ who make things happen and play a pivotal role in our economy. They will help businesses through these difficult times as well as helping to prepare for growth.”

Lorna Bryson, Head of UK Resourcing at Tesco concurs:

“Since we launched the apprentice programme in 2004, a thousand members of staff have successfully completed their Apprenticeship, with a further 800 enrolling this academic year.

“Apprenticeships allow us to provide great training and development to our staff, helping them to recognise their long-term career goals; half of our 2006/07 apprentices have progressed to become managers or team leaders. And Tesco benefits, too, by having hard working, dedicated, and talented individuals that are confident and satisfied in their roles.”

To find out more, employers should visit apprenticeships.org.uk or call the Apprenticeships helpline on 08000 150 600.

Ends

Notes to editors:

The survey was carried out by Populus and commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council. Populus interviewed a sample of 500 respondents who were responsible for Apprenticeship programme recruitment in their companies by telephone between 5 January and 29 January 2009.

The Government has rescued Apprenticeships. In 1997, 65,000 people started an Apprenticeship. In 2007/08, that number had risen to 225,000. Apprenticeship completion rates are now at an all-time high of 64 per cent, compared to 47 per cent in 2005/06.

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Background

Apprenticeship Week activities will take place around the country and involve celebrities, politicians and apprentices. The week is an opportunity to promote the benefits that apprentices bring to businesses and the economy.

Apprenticeships are a blend of on and off the job training that gives the apprentice the skills they need for their chosen career whilst earning a wage.
More than 130,000 employers currently employ apprentices. There are over 180 types of Apprenticeships available in more than 80 sectors of industry and commerce from engineering to boat building, veterinary nursing to accountancy.

**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.