London, 21 February: Despite there only being a handful of bands and artists coming away from last night’s BRIT Awards as winners, the Learning and Skills Council can reveal that this year’s nominees are by no means short of skills and talent. In fact, amongst 2008’s BRIT winners and losers there are college graduates, professional athletes, dancers, DJs, teachers and even a fireman - proving that musicians today are very aware that they need to work hard to secure, and to safeguard, their careers.

Super-skilled BRIT nominees, although not all winners, include highly acclaimed DJ Mark Ronson, who studied Psychology at college and Music Theory at university before pursuing a musical career; The Editors, who all met whilst studying Music Technology at university in Staffordshire; and KT Tunstall, whose studies at school and college led her to Royal Holloway College before following her passion for music.

These celebrated musicians all understand the value of gaining essential qualifications to complement their career choices and to secure their future employability, should their dreams of stardom not come true. By achieving the minimum set of qualifications – five GCSEs grades A*-C or a vocational qualification at Level 2 – young people can improve their future career...
opportunities. This is all the more achievable for today’s teenagers, with so many alternative routes to success and the possibility of financial support of up to £30 a week thanks to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Winners of this year’s BRITs Critics Choice Award and Female Solo Artist, Adele and Kate Nash, ensured that they had some serious training up their sleeves to secure the success of their musical careers, both studying at the renowned Brit School – also known for having produced talents such as Leona Lewis, Katie Melua and The Feeling.

Along with Adele and Kate Nash, The Hoosiers, losers in the category of best British Single last night, are also winners in the hidden skills stakes with members Sharlando and Sparkes both having spent time playing American football in the US and bass player Skarendah previously making his living as a fireman in Sweden! They can certainly be confident that they have plenty of skills to fall back on should Worried About Ray prove to be their only hit.

Quirky solo artist Bat for Lashes also admits that her studies in Music and Visual Art at Brighton had a huge influence on her artistic direction, right down to the design of her outfits and onstage performances. Furthermore, Bat for Lashes is also a qualified nursery school teacher proving that even the most committed and passionate of musicians knows there has to be a contingency plan.

Ruth Bullen, Director of Young People’s Learning at the Learning and Skills Council, comments: “It is very revealing to find that even major celebrities were determined to get a strong set of skills and qualifications before pursuing careers in the music industry. By doing this they have secured their future, whatever happens. We are increasingly aware how fickle the celebrity and showbiz worlds
are in terms of continued success. It is essential for all young people to have the necessary qualifications whatever their chosen career.”

For those interested in pursuing a career in music or in any other industry, achieving Level 2 equips people to make the best start. To find out more about the courses available, visit http://dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus

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Notes to editors:
This press release applies to England only.

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.
Visit www.lsc.gov.uk/inourhands or call 0800 011 30 30 for more information.

Apprenticeships
- There are currently 250,000 apprentices working in over 130,000 organisations in England alone. They can choose from over 200 career paths in 80 different sectors of industry and commerce.
- Anyone aged 16 and above is eligible to complete an Apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeships provide individuals with a mixture of on and off-the-job training whilst being paid. For employers, Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to improve their businesses bottom line through the tailored, relevant training of highly motivated individuals.
- 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

Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
Notes for editors – EMA Applications for 2007/8 Year
This press release applies to England only. Separate schemes are operated by the administrations for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

What are the key features of EMA?
- Weekly payment bands of £30, £20 and £10 per week, depending on household income.
- Intermittent Bonus payments depending on the programme of learning.
- Available for both academic and vocational study, up to level 3, which can include courses such as basic skills GCSE retakes, GNVQs, NVQs, as well as AS and A2s.
- No other household benefits are affected.
- Young people can still have a part-time job.

Who is eligible?
Young people are eligible to receive or to continue receiving EMA in the EMA year 2007/08 providing:
- They will already be 16, 17, 18 or 19 on the 1st September 2007;
- Household income criteria for 2007/8 applicants will be confirmed shortly;
- They are participating in full-time further education (as defined in EMA guidance) up to and including Level 3, or LSC funded e2e or a Programme led Apprenticeship
- They must be:
  - a person who is ‘settled’ in the UK, and been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
  - a national of any European Union (EU) country or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EU national, and been ordinarily resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least the three years prior to the start of his learning programme; or
  - an EEA migrant worker or the spouse or civil partner or child of an EEA migrant worker, who is ordinarily resident in the UK at the start of the learning programme and has been ordinarily resident in the EEA throughout the three year period prior to that; or
  - recognised as a refugee by the UK Government, or the spouse or civil partner or child of a refugee, have been granted Humanitarian Protection, or have EU Temporary Protection.
If a young person lives overseas as part of a family serving with HM Forces or the Ministry of Defence in Germany or Cyprus, they should call Service Children's Education on (0049) 2161 908 2525 for further advice.

**Application**
Evidence of an applicant’s household income for the previous tax year 2006/2007 and proof of the individual’s operational bank account are required.

Eligible applicants will receive a Notice of Entitlement explaining how much they will receive once they have enrolled and started attending their learning programme.

**EMA Contract**
Once enrolled, the student must attend all course sessions and sign an EMA Contract with their school or college. The contract sets out what is expected in terms of attendance, coursework and progress.

**14-19 area prospectuses**
- 14-19 area prospectuses are an online resource which provide information for young people on all learning courses and programmes available in an area
- The 14-19 area prospectus will be learners’ first choice of information for accessing all 14-19 learning opportunities
- All areas have a prospectus to enable learners to look at prospectuses from other areas of the country there is a national portal at: [http://dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus](http://dcsf.gov.uk/prospectus)
- From 2008, learners will be able to access information on the Diplomas being delivered in their area, through the local 14-19 area prospectus
- The area prospectuses will empower learners by giving them access to information about all courses from all providers in an area, this is likely to increase participation and engagement

**Diplomas**
The Diploma is part of a national programme to widen the choice of courses for young people to motivate them and encourage them to continue learning for longer. It will help them to gain the qualifications they need for success – at work, at college or at university.

Five Diploma subjects will be available from 2008 in the following subjects:
- IT
- Construction and the Built Environment
- Engineering
- Society, Health and Development
- Creative and Media

There are three levels of the Diploma – Foundation, Higher and Advanced – that students can choose to study at different stages in their education.

Alongside compulsory modules, students will have the opportunity to choose from a range of other subject options, whilst continuing to develop core skills in English, maths and IT. This learning will be advanced by work experience, which will provide a chance for young people to learn from and be mentored by professionals working in their chosen field. For more information, go to: [www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas](http://www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas)