



Calls flood in

Huge response to Apprenticeships campaign

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Nicky Brunker, LSC's Head
of National Marketing

The national television and press advertising campaign launched by the Learning and Skills Council to promote the new family of Apprenticeships has prompted an enormous response from employers interested in taking part.

In the two weeks following the 10 May announcement of new Apprenticeships by the Education Secretary and Chancellor, the LSC has been inundated with calls on its central contact number **08000 150 400** and has received far more visits than anticipated to its dedicated website www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Almost 3,000 telephone leads have been generated in the first fortnight and more than 10,000 visits recorded on the website,

which offers information on the Apprenticeship family covering young people from the age of 14 to adults over 25.

Of the enquiries received so far, more than 2,000 are from employers, including 27 companies employing more than 1,000 people, and around 11,000 are from potential apprentices. Before the campaign launch, employer enquiries were averaging around 50 per week.

The LSC marketing campaign is seeking to generate more than 33,000 employer responses and up to 23,000 Apprenticeship places to 2005.

Companies getting in touch on the national telephone number are receiving information packs within 24 hours and those interested in taking on apprentices are being contacted within seven days so that visits can be arranged to discuss their requirements.

Nicky Brunker, the LSC's Head of National Marketing, said the early response was far higher than anticipated. "We had a fantastic launch involving senior politicians and leading business figures across industry which has resulted in the

best product coverage we have ever had.

"Ally that to the national press and advertising campaign and we have managed to stimulate enormous interest. Clearly, we have a climate for change and people are recognising that we really are offering something different and important here."

The LSC accepts that initial figures on the central telephone line and website may be skewed by people making test calls to see if the system works. Its own tests show that its customer service network is responding effectively to all enquiries.

"The combination of advertising and public relations has built sufficient awareness to generate large numbers of leads", added Nicky. "We are working with more than 800 training organisations to ensure that the leads are quickly converted into actual Apprenticeship places.

"I feel it can only get better from here and would expect the number of leads to increase once our direct marketing and press and outdoor advertising kicks in."

Leading the way

Employers from construction and engineering are leading the way in responding to the launch of new Apprenticeships, with early indications showing that around two thirds of all business enquiries are from those sectors.

A regional breakdown broadly supports the national trend with construction and engineering dominant across the country. There is, however, a wide spread of interest with enquiries coming from media, business, professional services, health, agriculture, management, leisure, hospitality, hair and beauty companies and public sector organisations,

The biggest interest in the new Apprenticeships have come from businesses in London and the South East, each responsible for 16.5 per cent of enquiries received so far.

Fourteen per cent of enquiries have come from companies in the North West, 12 per cent from firms in the East of England, 10 per cent each from the East Midlands and North Yorkshire/Humber, nine per cent each from the East Midlands and South West and three per cent from the North East.

Strong competition for Awards

The Modern Apprenticeship Awards 2004 are now only weeks away and judges have faced a difficult task in selecting the 22 finalists from more than 1,000 high quality entries.

The awards will be presented later this month at a ceremony in London hosted by TV personality, Carol Vorderman, and are designed to recognise the commitment and dedication of companies and individuals to Apprenticeships, which have involved more than one million people since their launch a decade ago.

They fall into three categories:

Young Learner Award:

These awards are for an Apprentice and an Advanced Apprentice and recognise their contributions at work where they have exceeded expectations and resulted in measurable benefits to their company or organisation.

Personal Achievement Award:

These awards will be presented to two

apprentices, one aged between 16-18 and one between 19-24, who have successfully overcome barriers to achieve and exceed expectations.

Employer Awards: There are three awards covering small medium and large companies. These will be presented to businesses and organisations which have shown a commitment to Apprenticeships and supported their employees to complete Apprenticeship training.

Judges drawn from the Department for Education and Skills, British Chamber of Commerce, The Department for Trade and Industry, British Gas, The University for Industry, The Daily Telegraph, The Connexions Service, The Association of Colleges, Centrica, BAE Systems and the Learning and Skills

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Chris Banks

Council have now decided upon the winners and two runners up in each category.

The employer panel was chaired by Digby Jones, Director General of the CBI, the young learner panel by Chris Banks, Chair of the LSC's Young People's Learning Committee and the personal achievement panel by Ian Ferguson, Deputy Chairman of the Modern

Ian Ferguson

Apprenticeship Taskforce.

Around 450 invited guests are expected to attend the presentations event at the Hilton Park Lane Hotel on 24 June where individual winners will receive prizes with a value of up to £1,500.

Apprenticeships currently involve more than 255,000 people aged between 16 and 24 undergoing training in 160 different skills areas.

The contenders

The winner of this year's awards for employers will be chosen from among the following finalists.

Small employers

- G A Roberts Cheshire and Warrington
- DB Electrical Sussex
- Upper Cut West of England
- Hair Salons
- The Topiary Tree North Yorkshire

Medium sized employers

- Clarkson Gloucestershire
- Evans Ltd
- Weaver plc Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Slack & Parr Leicestershire

Large employers

- Bells Stores Ltd Tees Valley
- British Gas plc West Yorkshire
- BMW (GB) Ltd Berkshire



Apprenticeships

Employers interested in Apprenticeships should call 08000 150 400

To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Big guns blazing

Leading national figures from business, politics and education spoke strongly in favour of new Apprenticeships following their launch in London on 10 May.

Digby Jones, Director General of the CBI, was quoted in *The Independent* as saying:

“One thing we need to do is get more understanding of what Apprenticeships are. We have to get away from the idea that ‘I want more plumbers in society but my lad is going to university’. That dreadful and old-fashioned way of looking at it still pervades.”

Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC, told *The Times*:

“The changes announced today should make a real difference to the lives of thousands of young people who leave school every year.”

Pierre Danon, Chief Executive Officer of BT Retail, said in an interview with the Press Association:

“We know the benefits of employing apprentices. Not only does it bring enthusiastic ‘can do’ people into your workforce, it also allows us to contribute to our social responsibility towards youth employment.”

Ivan Lewis, Minister for Skills, told *The Times*:

“If you are going to reach out to a wide range of young people to do Apprenticeships, not just those defined as low-achievers, you have got to make clear that there are progression opportunities that could lead to higher education. We do not imagine that all apprentices will want to go to university but to imply that the future of

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Digby Jones speaking at the launch of new Apprenticeships

our economy means a choice between vocational and academic education is just nonsense.”

Graham Hoyle, Chief Executive of the Association of Learning Providers, was quoted by the Press Association as saying:

“Britain is at last going to have an educational system that does not regard vocational learning as a second-rate option. The winners will be young people, who will have more meaningful career options open to them, and to employers who will have more skilled recruits available in a growing labour market.”

Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, was quoted by the *Yorkshire Post* as saying:

“The Apprenticeship system is absolutely crucial, absolutely essential, not just for the future of young people in our economy but for the future of our economy as a whole.”

What the papers said

The launch of the new family of Apprenticeships to build upon the 10-year-old Modern Apprenticeship programme attracted widespread coverage in the national print and broadcast media.

The announcement by Education Secretary, Charles Clarke and Chancellor, Gordon Brown, that new Apprenticeships would cover young people aged from 14 to adults over the age of 25 and would be supported by a huge Learning and Skills Council marketing campaign aimed at employers was broadly welcomed.

“Perhaps the most innovative development is the creation of adult Apprenticeships,” wrote Peter Kingston in the *Guardian*. “By scrapping the upper age limit of 25, the Government is smashing at a stroke the image of the adolescent apprentice.”

The story was given prominent coverage by ITV news and Sky news as well as being featured in the BBC Working Lunch programme, Breakfast on BBC1, the Jeremy Vine Show on BBC Radio 2 and BBC Radio Five Live.

Writing in *The Times*, chief political correspondent, David

Chaytor, reported that Apprenticeships had been revamped to end the ‘bogus divide’ between the academic and non-academic. “British Gas said it had decided to expand Apprenticeships to its call centres in the light of the announcement. A spokesman said: ‘The Government’s extension of the Apprenticeship programme is very welcome and it ensures that more people are given the opportunity of a high-quality training place and a recognised qualification’.”

The *Daily Telegraph* highlighted the national marketing campaign which, it said, was designed to raise the profile of re-branded Apprenticeships. “Mr Brown said he was spending £800 million this year on apprentice-based training schemes designed to win more employers, young people and their parents over to the merits of vocational training.”

The *Telegraph* also quoted Martin Temple from the Engineering Employers Federation as saying: “Too often the Apprenticeship route is promoted as for the least able or the disaffected when in fact they provide an equally valuable route to a high level, highly skilled qualification.”

A matter of choice

Amy Whelan, a 20-year-old engineering apprentice with BT in Leicester, was undaunted when speaking before the Chancellor and the Education Secretary at the launch of new Apprenticeships last month and unstinting in her support for vocational learning as a means of forging a career.

As part of a team of 20 people who carry out site surveys for engineers to lay telephone cables and ducting, she told the audience at the event in London that an Apprenticeship was the right choice for her and for many others like her.

“Apprenticeships need to be seen as a high quality vocational alternative and we need to move away from this outdated view that they are for drop outs and that A Levels are for ambitious and motivated people,” she said. “I am ambitious and motivated and I chose an Apprenticeship over A Levels.”

Amy finished school with 10 GCSEs and then left the Robert Smyth School in Market Harborough after a year with an A/S Level in law to join the BT Apprenticeship scheme.

“I thought an Apprenticeship with BT offered better prospects for me than full-time education. I particularly like the fact that I can work and get an

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Amy Whelan makes her point at the launch of Apprenticeships

education at the same time and that my employer completely supports me through the process because they know an investment in me is an investment in the company,” she said.

“I think more employers should offer more Apprenticeship places. We really are a respected part of the team and contribute quite early on to the company, giving us a real sense of value and status. It’s been a wonderful experience for me and I’d recommend it to anyone.

“I am a woman in what has traditionally been seen as a man’s

world. Hopefully, as well as promoting Apprenticeships, I will also be able to help tackle some of the stereotypes that exist as well.”

Speaking after the event, she said she had taken an Apprenticeship on the recommendation of her mother, who works as a planner for BT Wholesale in Leicester. “She is definitely pleased that I took it. She thought it would be a marvellous career opportunity for me.

“After I have completed my Apprenticeship I would like to get more experience of the planning side and move on in BT.”

Apprenticeships Contacts



Apprenticeships

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