



Partnerships boost campaign

Sector Skills Councils are throwing their weight behind the campaign to promote the business benefits of taking on apprentices by aligning their marketing activities with those of the Learning and Skills Council.

A series of meetings to discuss collaborative marketing arrangements have been held in recent weeks between the LSC and councils covering a broad range of business and industry. Further meetings are planned as part of an ongoing programme to involve as many Sector Skills Councils as possible in the drive to create new Apprenticeship places.

“The responses we have had so far from the Sector Skills Councils we have met have been extremely positive and the fact that we have approached them to become involved has been warmly welcomed,” said Nicky Brunner, the LSC’s Head of National Marketing.

“Their support for the campaign is absolutely critical if we are to achieve our goals and the influence they have with companies operating within their sectors can only add to the momentum we have created so far in the first phase of marketing activity.

“The message that has come across clearly from

the meetings is that there is a real desire by them to get involved and to commit to working with us as partners so that we can achieve the best possible results.”

Talks about joint marketing have been held in recent weeks with Skills for Logistics, People First, Skillsmart, e-skills, SummitSkills, Construction Skills, Skillset and Cogent and meetings with other Sector Skills Councils are now being arranged.

The LSC is sharing information gained during the opening phase of the Apprenticeship marketing campaign, which began in May, as well as future plans.

Marketing materials are being made available to the councils to ensure that messages are put across consistently and agreements have been reached to share case studies on companies reaping the rewards of employing apprentices and improving workforce skills.

“These are very much early days, but we are confident of developing collaborative marketing activities with them and aligning their marketing to match ours to ensure that it as effective as possible,” added Nicky.

“We are also learning from them so we can get across the right messages to the right people.”

Party time for Apprenticeships

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Charles Kennedy visiting the Apprenticeship stand

Apprentices have taken to the road to demonstrate their skills to politicians at Learning and Skills Council stands staged at the three major party conferences.

Liberal Democrat leader, Charles Kennedy and his front bench team were among 30 MPs to visit at the first conference in Bournemouth, where

apprentices from West Wind Air Bearings in Poole showed them how to test the tensile strength of different metals.

A number of companies and apprentices from different sectors also gave catering, engineering, plumbing and electrical demonstrations at the Labour Party conference in Brighton. The stand will move on to the Conservative Party conference later this month.

“The idea of staging these events was to get a very public commitment from politicians to Apprenticeships and the

concept of improving the skills base of the country’s workforce. It was an incredible success,” said Hugh Millward, the LSC’s Head of Public Affairs.

“A lot of employers involved in politics locally and nationally also visited the stands and, together with politicians, were able to talk to the apprentices and their trainers.

“What came across strongly is that there is a great deal of enthusiasm about Apprenticeships. In fact a lot of the people who visited the stands had been apprentices themselves.”

Brighter than forecast

were 20 per cent above those forecast when marketing activities began in May.

“The success rates of the brokers visiting companies who have expressed an interest in Apprenticeships are running at 51 per cent, which is far higher than we originally thought they would be,” said Glenn Robinson, LSC Marketing Manager leading on the regional follow up to the marketing drive.

“When brokers have established a firm interest from employers, those leads are passed on to training companies to finalise arrangements. Our figures show that training companies are achieving a 54 per cent success rate in securing new Apprenticeship starts.

“We estimate that each company will take on an average of three apprentices. This is a prudent figure that is actually lower than what has been historically achieved but it takes into account the fact that many of the firms committing to Apprenticeships are small and medium sized businesses, which are unlikely to take on large numbers.

“With 2,381 firms forecast to sign up, we estimate that over 7,144 new apprentices will be taken on as a direct result of activities during the campaign’s first phase.”

The LSC expects that the second phase of the campaign will generate more than 5,100 Apprenticeship starts. A third phase may begin in

the New Year if needed to achieve the overall aim of generating around 33,000 leads from employers and create between 14,800 and 23,300 new places for apprentices during 2004-05.

Analysis of the latest marketing figures reveals an encouraging trend among companies which are looking to take on apprentices across a broad range of business activities.

“We have found that the Apprenticeships they are interested in extend significantly beyond those specific to their sectors,” added Glenn. “Retailers are not looking just at retail Apprenticeships for example. They are likely to be more interested in taking people on in the areas of customer service and business administration.”

Glenn Robinson

More than 2,200 companies will commit themselves to taking on new apprentices according to latest estimates from the LSC following the first phase of its national marketing campaign.

As television advertising launched the campaign’s second phase last month, analysis of the successes achieved by brokers and training organisations in turning employer enquiries into commitments to introduce Apprenticeships

Improvements to website

The ‘Are you 16-24?’ section of the Apprenticeships website is undergoing a number of improvements to provide more information to young people considering the vocational route into a career.

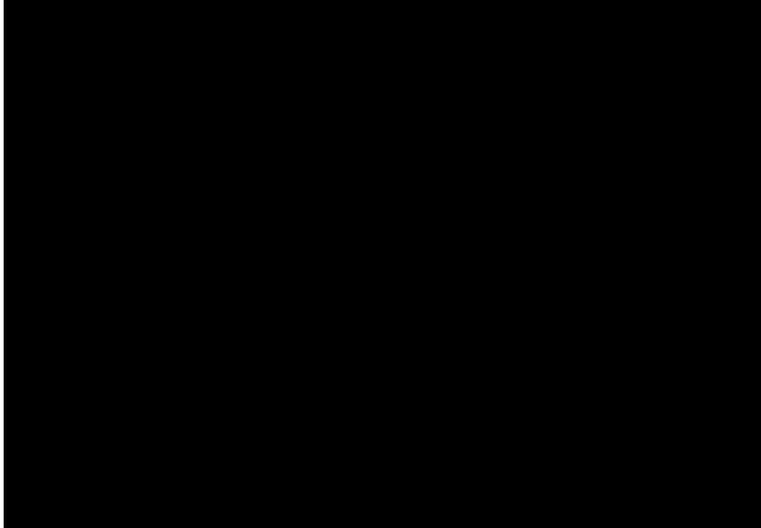
More material is being added to the ‘What can I learn?’ area of the site, providing more detail about different types of Apprenticeships and what they entail as well as the entry criteria.

Another important change has been made to the email form that visitors to the site’s ‘What next?’ section have to complete to register their interest. Young people will now be asked to explain in no more than 250 words why they want to embark on the Apprenticeship of their choice.

With interest in Apprenticeships running high, the LSC is keen to stress that they entail hard work and dedication and that candidates should be aware that their training could last between one and five years.

“The changes have been made so that we can be sure young people know exactly what they are committing to when they visit the website and before they register their interest,” said Susan Lawrence, LSC National Marketing Manager.

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“Apprenticeships are becoming an ever more popular option for young people leaving school and are a great way of embarking on a career, but they are not for everyone. We need to be sure that those applying are aware of the dedication they will need to succeed.”

Employers key to success

As Sector Skills Councils become more heavily involved in promoting Apprenticeships to businesses, we will be taking a regular look at issues affecting individual sectors and their plans for the future.

In this first feature we talk to Keith Marshall, Chief Executive of SummitSkills, about marketing collaboration with the LSC and the scope for increasing the number of Apprenticeships in the industries for which he is responsible.

Skills for Business, the network of Sector Skills Councils, has formed a new Apprenticeship board and given its full backing to the LSC marketing campaign aimed directly at employers.

Keith Marshall, Board Chairman and Chief Executive of SummitSkills, which is responsible for the building services engineering sector, covering the electrotechnical, heating, ventilating, air conditioning, refrigeration and plumbing industries, said all Sector Skills Councils were eager to support activities that would lead to the creation of new Apprenticeship places.

“I had an excellent meeting with the LSC recently and am absolutely delighted that this current campaign is aimed at employers, because they are the key to getting more apprentices into work.

“Getting young people who want to be apprentices is not the main issue in the sector we cover because there are more of

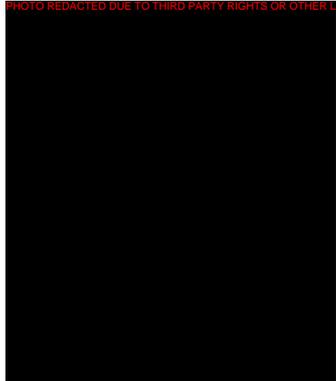
them than we can actually handle at the moment. The most vital thing is to engage with employers and get the message across that apprentices can help their business. That is the way to build interest.”

There are more than 551,000 companies generating an annual turnover of £19.3 billion in the sector covered by SummitSkills. Of the 558,000 people employed, around 18,300 are currently on Apprenticeships.

“Of those companies, around 80 per cent are small businesses, micro businesses and sole traders and many of them would be happy to take on an apprentice to teach the ropes to,” added Keith.

“If we can generate interest from them and work with them to minimise the issues around bureaucracy and other barriers that currently exist then only a small percentage penetration will lead to large number of apprentices on the ground. There is tremendous scope here.

“We have been discussing with the LSC about developing materials that are specifically aimed at employers in our sector to build on the general campaign and we have already begun the groundwork of generating case studies that we can use to demonstrate the benefits of Apprenticeships.”



Pass it on

The apprentice newsletter is produced by the LSC to keep partners and stakeholders up to date with developments in the campaign to make employers aware of the benefits of taking on apprentices and developing the skills of their workforces.

We are keen that it should reach the widest possible audience, so if you know of colleagues within your own organisation or others who might benefit from knowing more about Apprenticeships and their value to business

we would be pleased if you would pass it on.

Anyone who wishes to be added to the newsletter distribution list should send their email address to newsletter@lsc.gov.uk.

If you want to access Apprenticeship marketing materials, brand guidelines and logos you should visit the stakeholder section of the Apprenticeships website www.apprenticeships.org.uk, and click on the Apprenticeships Resources Toolkit link.



Apprenticeships

Employers interested in Apprenticeships should call 08000 150 400

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

No room for snobbery

Ivan Lewis, Minister for Skills and Training, told delegates at a packed fringe meeting during the TUC Congress that they should continue to challenge the snobbery that surrounds vocational education.

“Vocational education must not be viewed as simply an option for the least able or for young people with problems,” he said. “It must come to be seen as being as valuable and as high in status as academic learning for anyone who prefers to take that route.”

Mr Lewis was speaking at an event in Brighton at which a new TUC Apprenticeships guide for use by union learning representatives was launched with support from the Learning and Skills Council.

He said that the number of people now in Apprenticeships was over 250,000 – three times the level in 1997 – and that numbers would continue to rise with the introduction of pilot schemes for schoolchildren from the age of 14 and adults over the age of 25.

Ivan Lewis

“Apprenticeships offer a vocational alternative to people who want to learn at work rather than in college or university,” he added. “But it doesn’t stop there. Apprenticeships can also provide a route into higher education through foundation degrees.”

David Way, LSC Director of Skills, was impressed with the passion of people speaking at the event and said that trades unions were making a big difference in encouraging vocational training and raising workforce skills.

David Way

“Union learning representatives are helping to encourage involvement among the sort of people who would never normally put their hands up for training and they are able to access parts of the workforce that managers rarely can.

“I welcome the concept of learning representatives acting as mentors to apprentices. Many people that struggle will often just drop out and then be reluctant to return but personal support can ensure they struggle less and make their training a success.”

Apprenticeships in the news

Evaluation of the media coverage generated during the opening two months of the national Apprenticeship marketing campaign shows that more than 450 articles appeared in the national, regional, local and trade press.

Of the stories covered, 72 per cent were either entirely about Apprenticeships or featured them prominently, 31 per cent mentioned Apprenticeships in the headline and 98 per cent of all articles were favourable.

With 43 per cent of the stories being business and employer focused, it is estimated that 56 per cent of company managers and directors were reached among 44 per cent of all adults in the UK.

Media interest in Apprenticeships continued throughout September as the LSC prepared to launch the second phase of the marketing campaign with a fresh bout of TV adverts.

Broadcasters, including Radio Five Live, BBC Breakfast and BBC Working Lunch, all carried features on the option of vocational training.

Reporter Angela Garvey from BBC Breakfast interviewed Rod Kenyon from the British Gas Academy, which recruits 500 apprentices each year. “Apprenticeships are enjoying a renaissance and there are now more than a quarter of a million people working and learning on the

job,” she said. “By the end of next year, the Government aims to get 28 per cent of all young people to take up an Apprenticeship. But achieving that will largely depend on how well companies sell themselves to students.”

Rod Kenyon told the programme that apprentices were central to the company's recruitment programme. “There are key jobs in the organisation and there are people who earn substantial incomes working for us. There are people who eventually, hopefully, will occupy our senior managerial roles.”

Virginia Eastman from BBC Working Lunch featured apprentices at BMW, which

currently employs 600 and is keen to recruit more young women. Steve Nash, the company's After Sales Director, told the reporter: “It is still slightly male dominated but we have had over the years quite a number of females come through the scheme. It is something we would like to encourage because there is absolutely no reason why it should be male dominated.”

Stephen Gardner from the Learning and Skills Council was also interviewed. “The cost of the training is funded by the Government through the Learning and Skills Council. We meet the training charges and the employer meets the cost of the wages of the apprentice.”

TUC spreads the word

More than 10,000 copies of a new TUC booklet are being distributed to union learning representatives and negotiators across the country to help them encourage employers to take on more apprentices.

The publication, supported by the Learning and Skills Council, sets out details of new Apprenticeships and explains how union members can help promote them to companies in more than 160 business and industrial sectors.

Deputy General Secretary, Frances O'Grady, speaking at the launch of the booklet at a TUC Congress fringe meeting in Brighton, said: "Unions have a fine tradition of leading the way in learning at work and increasing opportunities for workers.

"The new Apprenticeship programmes represent a fantastic opportunity for union representatives to negotiate improvements in employers' approach to learning in the workplace. The booklet will equip them with all the necessary tools to start those negotiations."

The Apprenticeship guide, which features case studies demonstrating the benefits that apprentices can bring to companies, highlights how union representatives can help ensure high quality Apprenticeships and includes

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suggestions on what unions can include in learning agreements.

It emphasises how employers can benefit, pointing out that organisations offering Apprenticeships are viewed as being good places to work and forward thinking and that recruitment can help them fill intermediate level skills gaps. The training element of Apprenticeships is also Government funded.

Tony Dubbins, General Secretary of the Graphical, Paper and Media Union and Chair of the TUC Learning

and Skills Task Group, said: "As the Government quite rightly acknowledges, union representatives have played a critical role in promoting training and learning within the workplace.

"This new booklet offers union representatives valuable information with which to engage employers and their work colleagues, to improve the skill levels of the workforce and to close the productivity gap – something the UK economy desperately needs."

New board for Apprenticeships

A new Apprenticeship Programme Board has been formed by the Department for Education and Skills to oversee the delivery of Apprenticeships and monitor progress against targets.

The board, which has drawn members from a wide range of education and training organisations including the Adult Learning Inspectorate, the Association of Colleges, the Association of Learning Providers and Connexions, will be jointly chaired by Susan Pember, DfES Director for Apprenticeships and Skills for Life,

and Caroline Neville, the LSC's National Director of Learning.

Apprenticeships are now enjoying their highest ever profile through the national marketing campaign and the Chancellor and Secretary of State have given a commitment that they are central to the Government's agenda.

"This is an extremely high priority piece of work and we need the proper organisational management structures in place to ensure that the Apprenticeship programmes are

implemented effectively," said Susan Pember.

"It is extremely important that all the partners involved in delivering Apprenticeships sit around the table together regularly to discuss what they are doing and to tackle any issues that might arise."

The board met for the first time at the end of September at LSC national office in Coventry and is due to meet every six weeks. It will report directly to the DfES Ministerial Steering Group.

Corus school for chefs

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Apprentices are developing their culinary skills at the Corus Chefs School

The Corus hotels group is countering a chronic shortage of home grown talent in the kitchen by recruiting apprentices to its own Chefs School training scheme.

Launched in 2003 with an intake of 18 apprentices working in hotels throughout the country, it has proved to be so successful that the company received more than 1,000 applications from school leavers when it advertised 40 new Apprenticeship places earlier this year.

Mark Staples, the company's Food and Beverage Director, is delighted with the calibre of would-be young chefs attracted to the training

programme. "We recruit on passion, commitment and enthusiasm and the apprentices we have taken on are absolutely marvellous," he said.

"We set up the school because, as an industry, we are lousy at appealing to youngsters. We don't act as a cohesive group but as individual companies and there is no strategy to tackle issues such as the serious shortage of home grown chefs.

"This has been a massive issue for us and we had to recruit abroad because we couldn't get them here. We now have more than 100 Bulgarian, Romanian and Polish chefs working for us in the UK.

"But we can't just look at short term measures. We have a duty, morally as well as financially, to develop home grown talent and the school is our way of doing that. We are putting something back into the industry in the UK and are doing our bit to raise the profile of catering."

Corus apprentices work in various hotels under the guidance of head chefs and study for National Vocational Qualifications through a programme developed by the company with the support of the Hotel and Catering Training Company.

Each month the apprentices are brought together to gain more experience of the catering profession with visits to places such as New Covent Garden Fruit and Vegetable Market and Billingsgate Fish Market, as well as catering suppliers and restaurants.

Corus recently held its first award ceremony for its initial intake of apprentices at which Brett Armitage, who is training at the Richmond Gate Hotel received the food safety award.

Brett, who started work last September, said: "Chef School is a great opportunity for me. I've wanted to become a chef for as long as I can remember and now I have the chance to develop my skills and hopefully realise my ambition to climb the career ladder."

Apprenticeships Contacts



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LSC/A/AA000/1145/04