



## Top value for employers

Employers view Apprenticeships as a more valuable qualification than GCSEs, A levels and university degrees according to the latest independent research conducted on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council.

Twenty seven per cent of employers questioned by KRC Research put Apprenticeships at the top of their list for value, with 26 per cent choosing GCSEs, eight per cent A levels and only five per cent opting for university degrees.

The results of the Success Report 2004 are based on interviews conducted with more than 500 employers across the country, 1,000 young people and 1,000 parents.

Seventy per cent of employers taking part said they took on young people straight from school and 95 per cent

viewed work experience as being crucial to future success. Seventy two per cent acknowledged the need to provide training to ensure that staff were qualified to do their jobs.

Companies identified hard work, determination and perseverance as the qualities most likely to determine whether a person is a success in the workplace and cited the ability to work as part of a team, use tools and equipment and being organised as attributes that are important to them.

Research conducted with young people showed their views conflicted with those of employers when it came to valuing vocational training above academic qualifications. Fifty two per cent chose A levels as being the most important qualification to enhance their career prospects with 49 per cent opting for university degrees.

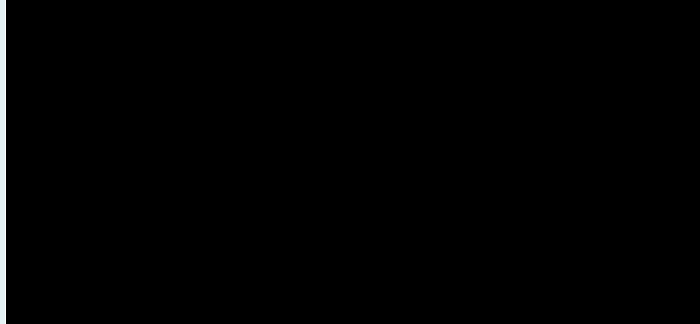
More than two thirds of those questioned said they were prepared to undergo training of between two and four years to achieve their ambitions and build a firm foundation for the future, while 62 per cent recognised that hard work was key to their success.

The majority of young people believe they should have made their work and education plans by the age of 18 and that they should have 'made it' in their career by the age of 27.

Commenting on the findings, Stephen Gardner, LSC Director of Work Based Learning, said: "With employers recognising Apprenticeships as a more valuable qualification than A levels it is clear that the Apprenticeships route offers an excellent career choice for young people – as demonstrated in the record numbers recruited."

## Exhibition showcase for skills

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Apprentice beauticians in Harrogate

Delegates at the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development annual conference were able to sample the skills developed by apprentices when the Learning and Skills Council road show rolled into Harrogate last month.

Having made a big impact at the three major political party conferences by giving demonstrations, apprentices were able to impress human resources professionals, who are being targeted by the LSC as part of its ongoing

marketing campaign.

The LSC stand was one of 350 in the exhibition at the Harrogate International Conference Centre, where around 2,000 delegates and 5,000 visitors gathered for the three day event involving 50 seminars and 110 speakers.

The appearance of health and beauty apprentices proved to be particularly popular as visitors to the stand lined up for head and shoulder massages.

Members of the LSC National Marketing team were on hand to explain that there are now more

than 180 different Apprenticeships available in 80 sectors and to spread the word on how apprentices can help companies improve their workforce skills.

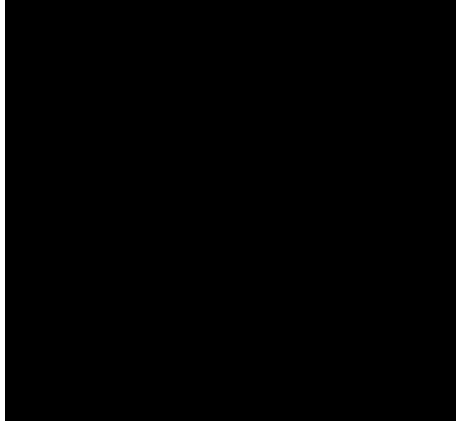
"Awareness of Apprenticeships was high at the exhibition and many visited our stand to let us know they already had apprentices or were in the process of introducing Apprenticeships within their organisations" said Kirstin Rowan from the LSC National Marketing team. Over the three days we were there we generated more than 200 new employer leads."

# Ringling the changes in training

e-skills UK, the Sector Skills Council responsible for raising productivity and competitiveness in IT, Telecoms and Call Centre businesses, is convinced there is huge scope for increasing the number of Apprenticeships currently on offer.



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Karen Price

More than 20 million of the UK's total workforce of 27 million now use computers as part of their job and there are ever increasing demands to improve workforce skills in order to keep pace with international competitors.

Call and Contact Centres, still regarded as a fledgling area, now employ around 800,000 people in this country alone, while the number of IT professionals has grown to 960,000 with Telecoms employing a further 240,000.

Their Sector Skills Council is banging the drum for workforce development and is involved in a number of initiatives and pilot schemes which involve promoting Apprenticeships as a route to improving company performance.

Its Chief Executive, Karen Price, is well aware that the varied businesses for which she is responsible have taken different views on training and

recruitment in the past but is convinced that having apprentices in the workplace is a sensible option for all.

In the current scheme of things only Telecoms has a history of recruiting apprentices. Many Call and Contact Centres are still evolving training schemes and have only recently begun to look at the Apprenticeship route while the IT professional sector has mainly looked to graduates as future workforce material.

"If we look first at the Contact and Call Centres, we can see there is huge potential and that Apprenticeships are now really beginning to take off. It really is an open door," she said.

"The Contact Centres have a workforce that is constantly churning and one of the things that can help stop this is the introduction of quality training programmes within all of these companies."

Because many of the people recruited by companies in this area come from customer service backgrounds rather than straight from school, e-skills UK is running an Apprenticeship type pilot scheme with companies in the North East, where people over the age of 25 can train to achieve a Bespoke Adult Diploma, which can lead on to a foundation degree.

Turning to Telecoms, Karen said there was a changing trend in how companies viewed apprentice recruits.

"There is a tradition of Apprenticeships in Telecoms and many companies now

are increasingly looking at progression routes from Apprenticeships through to higher work based education, such as Foundation Degrees.

"There really is no ceiling on Apprenticeships. It should be viewed as a high quality route for companies to improve their workforce skills."

While accepting that there has been scepticism among IT professionals, e-skills UK is working for change and is currently running a pilot scheme with a number of employers which involves a programme of Advanced Apprenticeships progressing to Higher Education.

"The employers are taking apprentices on and taking them through Level 3 to Level 4 by working with Higher Education providers who will take them through to Foundation Degree and Honours Degree level," added Karen.

"The important thing for us is that a lot of employers are starting to get the important message that there are benefits of growing your own workforce rather than simply recruiting graduates."

To find out more about the full range of e-skills UK programmes, products and services visit [www.e-skills.com](http://www.e-skills.com)

*\*In last month's sector focus on SummitSkills we incorrectly stated that there were 551,000 businesses in the building services engineering sector, employing 558,000 people. This should have been 55,000 businesses employing 558,000 people.*

## From Apprenticeship to a degree

A business to business internet service provider is building its workforce by taking on apprentices and encouraging them to go on into Higher Education.

REDNET, which employs more than 50 staff, is working in partnership with the Aylesbury Training Group to recruit apprentices, which it then encourages to go on to an Advanced Apprenticeship and, from there, to a Higher Education programme.

"We have embraced the introduction of the Apprenticeship scheme within the company," said spokeswoman, Shelley Baxter. "Its ease of compliance, minimum overheads required by the management team, coupled with its ability

to meet our industry skill sets, make this the ideal scheme for REDNET to support."

John Baldock joined the company as an apprentice in 2000 and is now working through the Advanced Apprenticeship to a Higher Education programme.

"It was one of the best choices I have ever made," he said. "The skills I have learned are extremely useful in the workplace and have helped me to become a valued employee."

"I continue to apply my skills at work while studying part-time, meaning that both me and my employer reap the benefits of the scheme."

# Back to the floor

Pierre Danon, Chief Executive of BT Retail, was the first Apprenticeship Task Force member to go 'back to the floor' to work with apprentices at Kidbrook Telephone Exchange in London as part of the LSCs ongoing marketing campaign.

He featured extensively in the Financial Mail on Sunday, which is running an ongoing series on members who will be working with apprentices over the coming weeks, experiencing their training and promoting the business benefits to companies of employing more.

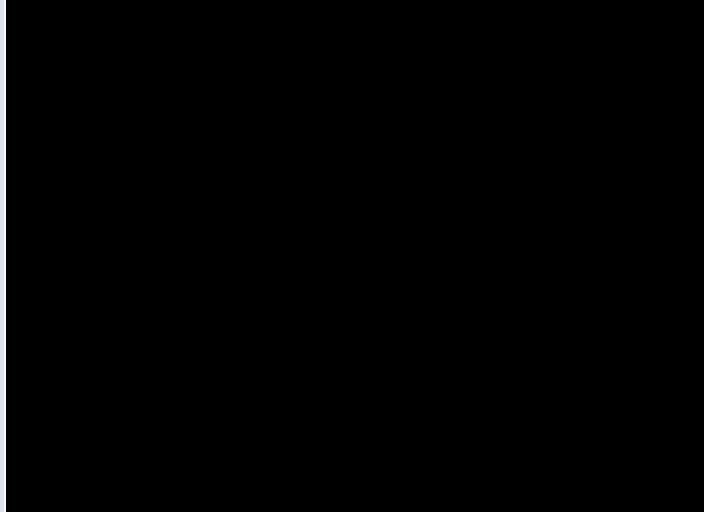
Jenny Little, the paper's Enterprise Editor, wrote that the "suave French boss was out lifting manhole covers and testing phone lines" to show his support for apprentices who are training to become telephone field engineers.

He is a member of the 26 member industry taskforce given the job of helping the Government and LSC to tackle Britain's skills gaps and achieve the target of getting 28 per cent of 16 to 21 year olds onto Apprenticeships by the end of this academic year.

"The courses are designed to be a practical on-the-job route into skilled careers for those aged 16 to 24", the paper added. "More than a quarter of a million are now on Apprenticeships, which run for between one and three years."

With 600 apprentices already on its books and with plans to recruit 300 more, BT Retail is reaping the business benefits of taking an enlightened approach towards training its workforce of the future.

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Pierre Danon (right) goes back to the floor

Where some companies may view Apprenticeships as a cost rather than investment, the telecoms giant is convinced that the young people it puts through training have a positive impact on its bottom line.

Research conducted by the company estimates that it makes a net profit of £1,300 a year on each apprentice it employs. Staff who undertake an Apprenticeship are shown to be 7.5 per cent more productive and are more likely to stay with the business.

## Apprenticeship Awards 2005

The hugely successful national Apprenticeship Awards, which ran for the first time last year, will be repeated in 2005 and culminate in a presentation event at the Hilton Park Lane in London on June 16.

Application packs for employers and individuals will be available from early January, either by ringing local Learning and Skills Council offices or by downloading copies through the website [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

"Last year's awards drew a fantastic response with more than 1,000 entries from employers and individuals and we are hoping that we will get even more in 2005," said John Minton, LSC National Account Manager.

"This time around we have increased the number of categories open to employers which will allow smaller companies who successfully use Apprenticeships to benefit their business to be recognised."

Award categories next year will be open to micro businesses with between one to nine employees, small companies with between 10 and 49 staff, medium companies employing between 50 to 249 people and large companies with workforces of over 250.

For individuals, there will be an Apprenticeship award, an Advanced Apprenticeship award and Personal Achievement awards for young people

aged between 16 and 18 and 19 to 24 years of age.

A steering group made up of national and local representatives from the LSC, the Department for Education and Skills, the Apprenticeship Task Force, the Association of Colleges, the Association of Learning Providers, the Sector Skills

Development Agency and Connexions has been formed to oversee the running of the 2005 awards.

As with last year, judging panels will be made up of leading representatives from the worlds of education, training and business.



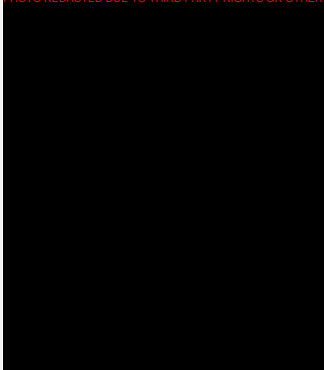
Apprenticeships

Employers interested in Apprenticeships should call 08000 150 400

To find out more about Apprenticeships, visit [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

# Creating a perfect partnership

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Steve Stewart

The relationship developed over the last three years between the Learning and Skills Council in Coventry and Warwickshire and the Connexions service is held up as an example of partnership working to which all local offices should aspire.

The closeness of the two organisations did not come about by accident. A lot of hard work and soul searching went into drawing up joint arrangements that are now producing tangible results in delivering education and training, including Apprenticeships.

"We started with a facilitated event between our two management teams

where we were open and honest with each other about our relationships in the past," said Rachael Lewis-Bell, who is responsible for education and lifelong learning with the local LSC.

"It was an attempt to eliminate the little niggly things. We decided to leave our baggage at the door and work together to ensure that we provided the best service we possibly could."

That original meeting in 2001 resulted in a protocol being drawn up which has led to the two organisations preparing joint business plans and an annual timetable for working.

Executive Directors from the LSC and Connexions, along with their Senior Management teams, hold monthly planning meetings and there is a joint marketing and promotional plan that includes co-branded events and promotional literature.

An agreement has also been reached on handling young people leads from

the Apprenticeship campaign, with the local LSC doing an initial follow up and Connexions then making further contact to ensure that each young person knows what their prospects are.

"We have developed together a September guarantee with the aim that each person leaving school in June should know where they will be in education, training or work by September," added Rachael, who was recently supported by Connexions in recruiting two apprentices to her team.

"We set off with the aim of having a zero figure for young people without a place and ended up with 104, which was a remarkable achievement in itself."

The two organisations are currently working on plans to create a clearing house system to match young people to the right education and training. It will be computer based and will involve year 11 students registering their requirements on-line.

"This will allow us both to look at who is applying, where spare places will be and who hasn't had an offer. We will be able to find out where young people are applying and where there are gaps that need to be filled."

Steve Stewart, Executive Director with Connexions, said the partnership had made a real difference to young people in the area.

"There are more young people in Coventry and Warwickshire in education, employment and training than ever before in our history. Almost 93 per cent of Year 11 students who left this year are doing positive things, which is the highest ever figure. This isn't by accident and good luck. It is a result of us genuinely working together.

"What I am really pleased about in terms of our relationship with the LSC is that there are shared values and that the work we do together is about improving people's lives. We do not let anything get in the way of that."

## Stephanie's passion rewarded

A passion for plants and gardening history has helped Stephanie Wright become the first female deputy head gardener at a Warwickshire hotel in more than a century and pick up a local Apprentice of the Year award.

The 24-year-old, who works on the 10 acre gardens of the Mallory Court Hotel at Bishop's Tachbrook, began work as an apprentice horticulturalist a year ago under head gardener Bill Glock.

She has helped him restore a rose garden and water feature in the 19th century gardens, whose design is thought to have been influenced by the work of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Luytens.

"Stephanie is first class and it is very

rare to find someone so young and so dedicated to gardening," said Bill. "It more often comes to people in their 30s and 40s.

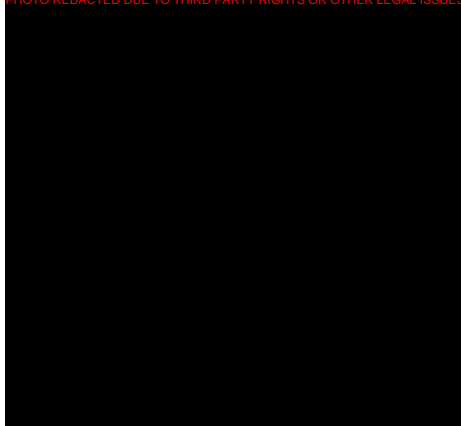
"I have already given her some design projects which were very good so I gave her the funding to continue with the work. I have made her my number two and she is the first female deputy in more than 100 years."

Stephanie, from Cannon Park in Coventry, received her Apprentice of the Year award from Warwickshire College Moreton Morrell Centre. "It was a complete surprise and I am really pleased to receive such an honour," she said.

"I love my work and my Apprenticeship and I think on the job training is the

best way to learn to be a gardener. I am really lucky to be working in such a magnificent garden with such a supportive boss."

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Stephanie with Bill Glock



# More employers on board

More than 4,200 employers responded to the LSC in the opening three weeks of phase two of the Apprenticeship marketing campaign, bringing the total number of responses generated since activity began in May to around 17,400.

These have resulted in over 11,000 leads that have been sent to the regions to be followed up by contracted local brokers and training providers who then meet employers to try and establish a firm commitment to taking on apprentices.

Analysis shows that brokers are achieving a 51 per cent success rate in gaining a provisional commitment from employers and that providers are recording a 54 per cent success rate in establishing firm commitments.

The LSC is forecasting that 3,080 of the employers contacted so far will commit to introduce Apprenticeships which, based on the assumption that each will have an average of three apprentices, – lower than historical levels – will result in 9,239 new Apprenticeship starts.

Overall targets for the campaign, which will run in three phases, are to generate 33,318 employer responses to 2005 and achieve between 14,845 and 23,292 Apprenticeship starts.

Television advertising has been responsible for generating 56 per cent of employer phone responses. Direct marketing

has accounted for 10 per cent of responses while referral from partners and interactive responses through the website have brought in the remainder.

The LSC's analysis of the campaign will be improved this month when it calculates and publishes variations in success rates being achieved by brokers and providers across the country.

"It is clear that there are wide variations," said Glenn Robinson, the LSC Marketing Manager who is leading the regional follow up to the campaign. "The new statistics will provide local offices with a starting point to review the performances of their brokers and providers.

"We will be working with local LSCs and regions to identify the highest performing brokers and providers so we can share best practice as soon as possible in order to improve performance and value for money across the country.

"We hope that this best-practice will be transferable to other skills programmes and we are currently planning three regional best practice events to take place in early 2005."

## Apprenticeships Contacts



### Apprenticeships

- > If you would like to be added to our newsletter distribution list send your email address to [newsletter@lsc.gov.uk](mailto:newsletter@lsc.gov.uk)
- > To find out about the business benefits of Apprenticeships, contact

**08000 150 400**

- > or visit our website at

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