

Apprentices key to ‘Get Somerset Working’

Somerset businesses today showed their support for a new national apprenticeship drive as they celebrated creating 268 new apprentice and work experience placements.

After a week that saw Prime Minister David Cameron announce further multi-million funding for apprenticeships, employers and apprentices came together at a business event in Taunton.

A recent drive by Somerset colleges, training providers, Somerset County Council and Somerset Skills and Employment Board saw 156 employers commit to creating a raft of new working opportunities.

County Councillor, David Hall, Cabinet Member responsible for Economic Development, said: “Today’s event has been hugely important in raising awareness of the value of apprenticeships to Somerset’s economy.

“Apprenticeship starts across Somerset rose by 45% to 4,500 in total last year, and the recent Get Somerset Working campaign shows that employers are still keen to invest in their workforce and that they value the role of apprentices in developing their businesses.

“To help make things easier the government has this week announced a new £6m fund for Degree Level Apprenticeships, and a £1,500 wage grant to help businesses with fewer than 250 employees take on 16-24 year old apprentices.”

Kath Gigg, the new Chairwoman of the Somerset Skills and Employment Board, said: "It is all about helping businesses to recruit the right people."

In her address to businesses at the event, she said: "We want to ensure that employers can get people with the right attitude, motivation and skills, and can access training at the right cost and right quality. Apprenticeships and work experience placements are key to making this a reality. It provides businesses with the opportunity to invest in people so that they become the right people."

Graham Knight from the Get Somerset Working partnership said: "We have been delighted with the number of employers that have got involved with our latest campaign. Praise in particular should go to the training providers and colleges in Somerset that have worked hard with employers to develop something that was right for them.

"For instance some businesses are not yet in a position to take on an apprentice, but are able to provide work experience placements. These are just as valuable for both employers and employees and they often lead onto something else."

For more information on apprenticeships call the National Apprenticeship Service on 08000 150 600 or visit the website www.apprenticeships.org.uk.

For more information on offering work experience placements contact your local job centre.

Ends

For more information please contact Robert Downes in the Communications Team at Somerset County Council on 01823 358 175 or rmdownes@somerset.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors

- 156 employers have pledged to create 145 apprenticeships and 123 work experience placements as part of the Get Somerset Working 100 day campaign, which ended on 18 February.
- The Get Somerset Working Business event was organised by the Somerset Chamber of Commerce in conjunction with the Get Somerset Working Partnership.
- Get Somerset Working is a partnership supported by Somerset County Council, Somerset Employment and Skills Board, Acacia Training, Bridgwater College, Somerset College of Arts and Technology, Somerset Skills and Learning, Strode College, Yeovil College and Richard Huish College.
- Follow Get Somerset Working on Twitter @GSW_Somerset.
- For more information on National Apprenticeship Week and current funding available visit the website at www.apprenticeships.org.uk.