

# Scottish Apprenticeship Week starts today

The first ever Scottish Apprenticeship Week gets underway today. During the week employers in Edinburgh will be encouraged to explore the benefits of employing Modern Apprentices.



This year Skills Development Scotland is looking to work with Scottish employers to recruit 25,000 new Modern Apprentices – 5000 more than last year – in a range of over 80 different occupations.

Last year 574 apprentices were taken on by businesses in the capital and it is hoped many more employers will follow suit in 2011.

There is growing support for the apprenticeship model as bosses and individuals recognise the ‘earn as you learn’ benefits it offers.

SDS chief executive Damien Yeates explained: “Businesses of every shape and size can reap real rewards from bringing on employees to a stage where they are fully qualified for the job and understand their employer’s needs and aims.”

Bosses at one of Edinburgh’s most popular visitor attractions

believe its 'dynamic' young apprentices are having a big impact on the business.

As the first Scottish Apprenticeship Week gets underway, managers at Edinburgh's Our Dynamic Earth are delighted that their commitment to staff training and development has reaped huge rewards.

Customer experience manager Kim Gibson explained: "We have five members of staff undergoing the Modern Apprenticeship programme, which is supported by Skills Development Scotland, at the moment. It has been fantastic to watch them grow in confidence and ability.

"They are happier, more motivated and have a much keener awareness of the needs of the business – which is great for the company as a whole."

Our Dynamic Earth, which tells the story of planet Earth through interactive exhibits and impressive technology, is located at the bottom of the city's Holyrood Road.

Kim added: "We selected staff for the Modern Apprenticeship programme from departments which tend to have a higher number of seasonal staff, like visitor services. In those areas, often the core, permanent staff don't have a lot of scope for career development. The Modern Apprenticeship programme allows us to give them a challenge, the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification and develop new skills.

"It runs very smoothly – our learning provider deals with all the paperwork, which is a real benefit."

Graeme Haldane, 22, who lives in Edinburgh, completed his Modern Apprenticeship while working as a visitor services guide and science, communication and entertainment officer at

Our Dynamic Earth.

“I left school unsure about what to do – university wasn’t for me at the time, and I didn’t know what job to go for,” he said. “Coming here and getting the chance to do the Modern Apprenticeship has been a great experience. I really enjoy the hands-on learning and it’s made me much more confident in my job.

“It has really opened my eyes to the world of work, and it has also made me think about studying further. I wasn’t ready to do that when I left school, and I didn’t know much about Modern Apprenticeships. But I’d recommend it to anyone – it has been very useful and enjoyable for me.”

During Scottish Apprenticeship Week scores of employers all over the country will be outlining how their operation has benefited from having apprentices in their workforce.

They also have the chance to enter the 10<sup>th</sup> Modern Apprenticeship Awards which recognise the achievements and contributions of apprentices and employers. The closing date for entries to the Awards is this Thursday and full details [are available here](#) .

These employers have already found how the Modern Apprenticeship programme has helped them build a strong and competitive workforce and improve productivity.

Skills Development Scotland can help businesses through the

Modern Apprenticeship programme and provide funding incentives such as the Employer Recruitment Initiative. This can help businesses access up to £2,000 if they take on a Modern Apprentice who has previously found it difficult to secure employment or apprenticeship training

Damien Yeates added: “A highly trained workforce enables companies to keep pace with changes in technology and working practices, giving businesses a competitive edge. Modern Apprenticeships also help businesses to provide clear career paths, enabling them to retain valued employees.

“Investment in Modern Apprenticeship can help businesses build more capable, efficient, loyal and motivated workforces – improving productivity today and tomorrow.”

Call 0800 7836000 or visit [www.sds.co.uk/modernapprenticeships](http://www.sds.co.uk/modernapprenticeships) for more information.