

Fresh way to tailor young people to the world of work

This week school and college leavers were starting apprenticeships, with firms in a diverse range of sectors now seeing the schemes as the best way to find top talent, as **Adam Jupp** reports

ONCE seen as the realm of the local garage, plumbing merchants or hair-dressing salon, the face of apprenticeships is changing.

As tuition fees rise, many school-leavers and parents alike are increasingly thinking seriously about whether a university education is the right way to go.

At the same time, a growing number of companies, in sectors from pharmaceuticals to the law, are looking to recruit straight from schools and colleges.

Instead of tapping into the pool of graduates, they are working with education providers to build programmes that give apprentices the training, work experience and qualifications they need.

Last year, the government commissioned ex-Dragons' Den star Doug Richard to review the apprenticeship system in the UK.

The Richard Review was the start of a revolution for apprenticeships and kicked-off a fundamental change in the way businesses view them.

Here, we profile some examples from our region.

ASTRAZENECA

GLOBAL pharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca recently took the decision to recruit its first cohort of business apprentices to be based at its Macclesfield manufacturing site.

Despite having delivered a jobs blow to the region by shifting hun-



■ Five of the apprentices which have been taken on by AstraZeneca

dreds of jobs from its Alderley Park site to Cambridge, AZ has taken on eight local school-leavers.

It started its recruitment drive in the spring and partnered with the Apprentice Academy, in Manchester, to source candidates from schools and colleges throughout Greater Manchester and surrounding areas.

During the process, students registered their interest and attended three assessment days that took place at the Apprentice Academy and AZ's Macclesfield site.

All eight candidates that attended the assessments got 'unconditional job offers' based on their predicted A-level grades.

AZ vice-president Chris Day said: "We're very keen at AstraZeneca to introduce an apprenticeship scheme for a number of reasons. It is a great way to nurture new talent for the benefit both of our business and of the successful candidates."

The apprentices offered positions with AZ came from Fallibroome Academy, Poynton Sixth Form, The

Kings School, Tytherington High School and Winstanley College.

Judith Wallace, head of IT and computing at Winstanley, said: "The apprenticeship opportunities at AstraZeneca make me want to go back and have my time at school again."

AZ's apprentices will start the Apprentice Academy's Graduate Calibre programme this September. The new Graduate Calibre programme has been specifically designed for apprentices as an alternative to university, giving them the critical thinking and life skills they will need to help them be successful in the workplace.

Dom Sheratte, 18, of Macclesfield, is one of the eight AZ apprentices. He said: "After finding out about apprenticeships during a school assembly, I knew straight away that this was the opportunity for me as I did not fully know what I wanted to do at university and did not want to waste time."

"The AstraZeneca apprenticeship programme is fantastic and will give

me valuable business experience and hopefully a wonderful career. My friends think I have been the luckiest out of all of them."

His dad, Daniel, said: "Professional organisations such as AstraZeneca provide young, innovative people with an excellent developmental alternative to an academic route and this is certainly something that has enthused and inspired our son. With his passion to succeed, we hope that this will lead to an excellent pathway to higher achievements."

Alison Bagnall, director at the Apprentice Academy, said: "Parents are very much in the dark when knowing the options available for their children. It's a very worrying time for them, not knowing what will be the best option."

"This is why we spent the last nine months visiting schools and speaking to parents specifically about our new graduate calibre programme and discussing the concept with them. This new type of programme has gained a lot of interest, particularly when combined with organisations like AstraZeneca which is a fantastic employer."

MANCHESTER LAW SCHOOL

A PIONEERING new route to the legal professions has been launched.

Manchester Law School – part of Manchester Metropolitan University – is teaming-up with Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) Law School to provide new Legal Services Apprenticeships to

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