

PRESS RELEASE

362 apprentices from across the south east graduate at National Apprenticeship Awards 2022

(Mon 17 October, 2022) – 362 apprentices from Kilkenny, Carlow, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford graduated this morning at a special ceremony in Kilkenny at which they were presented with their awards by Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Malcolm Noonan, TD.

The National Apprenticeship Awards 2022 for the south-east region saw the assembled graduates mark the completion of 21 different apprenticeships from five industry sectors: engineering; electrical; motor; construction; and hospitality and food.

The National Apprenticeship Awards recognise the achievements of apprentices who have completed four years of study and are now driving new career standards of leadership, teamwork, creativity and problem-solving in their sectors. The event was hosted by Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board (KCETB) for the region and supported by SOLAS, Tipperary ETB, and Waterford and Wexford ETB.

In his address to the graduates and assembled guests, Minister Noonan highlighted that over 8,400 employers across 16 industry sectors in Ireland are now using apprenticeships to attract and grow their talent, drawing on school leavers, careers changers, and attracting a broad range of people from diverse backgrounds and abilities. He also commented on the growth in female apprenticeships nationwide.

“Today we have three female apprentice graduates among us: Joanne Cooney, Chloe Doyle electricians and Hannah McCann, a chef. Since Joanne and Hannah started their apprenticeships in 2017-18, there has been a significant increase in female apprenticeships,

which is heartening. Nationally, the number of female apprentices has grown from 26 in 2015 to 1,500 in 2022”, said Minister Noonan.

“These awards provide a time to not only celebrate the achievements of the very best apprentices in their chosen areas; it also allows us an opportunity to reflect on the very practice of apprenticeships . The young people who have completed their apprenticeships, and the award winners here today, have spent four years both studying and learning through practical hands-on and academic work and it is that education model that both provides them with a picture of what their chosen profession entails and a practical preparation for the working environment”, said Minister Noonan.

“The award winners here today represent all that is good about the quality of our apprenticeship programme, transferable skills that are recognised worldwide”, he added.

Director of the National Apprenticeship Office Dr Mary-Liz Trant spoke of the expansion of apprenticeship opportunities in Ireland in recent years. “With 66 programme options now available and up to 30 more in the pipeline, apprenticeships are now firmly on the map as a choice for school leavers and older learners, people of all ages and backgrounds. And the feedback from employers on the quality and talent of the apprentices they recruit is outstanding. We are delighted to see the acceleration in the number of employers using apprenticeship as a talent pipeline in this region of Kilkenny and Carlow and all around the country”, said Dr Trant.

Representing Education and Training Boards (ETBs), Eileen Curtis, the chief executive of KCETB said, “This is a special day for the apprentices and their families and an important milestone in their skills training and development. These graduates are the next generation of skilled crafts men and women whose skills are so much in demand nationwide and who will contribute to the economic growth of our country in the years ahead. Strong apprenticeship growth is key to the development of our region and our economy”.

The ceremony recognised the first Phase 2 electrical apprentices from the south-east region who commenced training in 2018 in the very first Kilkenny-based course, and also included commis chef apprenticeship graduates for the first time, following its introduction by KCETB in 2018. The graduate chefs were: Garret Brennan (Avalon House Hotel, Co. Kilkenny); Cormac Donal Keane (Woodford Dolmen Hotel, Carlow); Stuart Dunne Maher (Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny); Peter Thorpe (Talbot Hotel, Wexford); Hannah McCann (Ballinahinch Castle, Co. Galway) and Michael Gaule (Kelly's Hotel, Rosslare).

KCETB Director of Further education and Training Martha Bolger spoke of KCETB's plans to expand its apprenticeship offering over the coming months. She paid a particular tribute to the phase 2 apprentices who completed some of their training during the lock-down period of the pandemic. She said their "commitment and resilience will stand to them as employees of the future".

Guest speakers included the executive chef of Kelly's Hotel, Eugene Callaghan, and Martin Stapleton, a director of Kilkenny-based CDS Architectural Metalwork who both spoke of the skill and value today's apprentices are bringing to industry.

Concluding the ceremony, Mary Butler, the training services manager for KCETB, congratulated the apprentices and wished them every success in their careers.

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