



# Improving performance and enhancing lives in the UK chemical industry



Apprenticeships

## Building stronger futures with a world-leading acrylic manufacturer

Lucite International is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Japanese Mitsubishi Rayon Company. The company makes intermediate chemicals for acrylic based products.

Cassel site in Billingham is Lucite's largest global production site for MMA manufacture producing around 250,000 tonnes a year of two 'building block' products used in the manufacture of acrylics - methyl methacrylate (MMA) and methacrylic acid (MAA).

Lucite International is one of the most consistent annual sponsors of apprentices in process industry manufacturing in the north east and has an excellent track record of taking apprentices into employment after training. The company has around 300 employees on Teesside many of whom have long service with the Company.



## The Solution

Lucite International has worked in partnership with TTE for over 10 years on a variety of technical apprenticeship programmes which are a key entry route into employment with the company. It is also currently working with TTE on a skills re-training programme involving ex-military personnel who have proven technical experience.

Currently, Lucite International has apprentices training with TTE in various job roles including Young Scientist, Production Technician and Instrument Technician.

Last year one school leaver joined the two year Young Scientist programme and is training at the Cassel Site Laboratory, two others were sponsored on an Instrument Technician Apprenticeship via the TTE facility at South Bank and three college/school leavers started the new SIP Science Manufacturing Technician Apprenticeship also via TTE. This involves 1 year studying Process Engineering Operations followed by 2 years site based training at Cassel site to gain essential practical process engineering skills and experience.

Evidence of the success of this partnership working was provided when Lucite International recently landed the top two prizes at the prestigious Tees Valley Production Technician Apprenticeship Awards ceremony. One of their apprentices (Cameron Appleyard) was crowned best overall Tees Valley Production Technician (TVPT) apprentice during the 4 years he spent learning his trade skills at TTE and on site with Lucite. Another Lucite sponsored apprentice (Dean Blakemore) finished runner up in the same category, thereby completing a first ever 'double' for Lucite in the eleven years of TVPT's history.

Cassel Site Director Melanie Jury said: "Both apprentices have been outstanding throughout their time both at TTE and in the last two years on-site and we were delighted to offer them full time positions within the company. They are both enhancing the shift teams in which they are working."

Lucite International is also continuing its successful formula of recruiting ex-Military personnel by sponsoring three new candidates. All three, who have transferrable skills developed during their careers in the Navy, Army and RAF, will spend a year on a Process Operations training programme at TTE before joining shift teams at the Cassel site for chemical engineering skills training to launch their careers with Lucite International.

“ A big challenge we face is bridging the ‘skills, competence and experience gap’ to ensure we have suitably qualified, trained and competent employees available to take up technical, engineering and commercial job roles when our older and experienced employees retire. Ensuring our apprenticeship sponsorship, training and recruitment programmes ‘match up’ with our succession planning for business continuity is, therefore, extremely important.

Lucite International has been proud to sponsor apprentices for over ten years and we've been fortunate to be able to employ the majority of those apprentices at the end of their training. The benefits of a solid apprenticeship are there for all to see and around twenty five per cent of our workforce is now made up of people who joined Lucite via an apprenticeship.

We also value the commitment and discipline of ex-forces personnel who have the relevant skills, aptitude and experience of team working which are key requirements for anyone working in a high hazard Chemical Manufacturing environment. They also bring ideas and methods of working picked up in previous job roles and recognise the importance of having systems to ensure safe working practices are followed. ”

**Faith Hambley**

Learning & Development Officer