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# Apprentice Awards



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For details on how to enter the APSE Apprentice Awards please complete the  
[Notification of interest form](#)

For exhibition and sponsorship opportunities at any APSE event, email Matt Paton at  
[m.paton@spacehouse.co.uk](mailto:m.paton@spacehouse.co.uk)



## Aberdeen City Council

Our Apprenticeship programme has been in place for over 12 years now and we currently have 54 apprentices of various trades. These include, joiners, painters, plumbing/heating engineers, electricians, plasterers, slaters, lift engineers and blacksmiths.

Since the scheme started we have won over 120 awards at local and national level. We retain roughly 90% of our apprentices when they are time served and a big percentage stay with us for 5 years or more after their apprenticeship ends.

We also have a rotation system in place where apprentices move to different departments within our building services e.g. Voids, response maintenance, contracts and public buildings.

### Challenges to the Council in providing the programme

The main challenge to the Council is the initial cost and as our apprentices count for roughly 20% of our trades employees it is difficult sometimes to get the best tradesperson to mentor the apprentices.

### Benefits to the Council of the apprentice programme

The benefits the programme provides is to sustain the workforce with experienced trades people who know the job and have the knowledge they have gained during their apprenticeship to carry out the tasks they are asked to do. The problem we have in the Aberdeen area is a big percentage of building trade employees end up in the oil and gas industry.

### Any other comments?

We are lucky within Aberdeen City Council to have the backing of our elected members and the senior management team who support the apprenticeship scheme and are happy to endorse the Council taking on approximately 15 apprentices every year.

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**“We are lucky within Aberdeen City Council to have the backing of our elected members and the senior management team” .**

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## Berneslai Homes

As of 2020 we have 15 apprenticeships at Berneslai Homes who work in varied roles across Construction and Gateway Plaza.

The roles include electricians, operations support, bricklayer, gas plumbers, trainee procurement officer, store keepers and office apprentices.

The duration of our apprenticeships range from 2 to 4 years depending on the type of profession, each requiring 3 GCSEs or equivalent preferably in mathematics, English language and a science. We work 37 hours per week whereby apprentices will be given the chance to gain experience alongside a fully qualified mentor or experienced staff member whilst receiving formal training at a college. We hope that all apprentices will achieve a Level 3 Advanced Modern Apprenticeship. We don't have any age limits on our apprenticeships meaning people can apply from the age of 16. The salary is dependent on which type of apprenticeship.

Our apprentice scheme provides excellent value for money; by investing in young people, we are:

- Increasing social capital in our communities.
- Reducing worklessness, including among our own tenants.
- When we recruit our apprentices to permanent employment, they are amongst our most loyal, committed and hardworking staff, and we know they're trained to the highest standards.
- Enabling disabled young people and those with other barriers into employment.

We have enjoyed excellent outcomes from our apprentice scheme; over 90% of our apprentices go on to gain permanent employment in Berneslai Homes, or other excellent alternative employment.



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Outcomes from our approach include:

- An increase in women in our construction workforce.
- An increase in males in our predominantly female admin roles.
- An increase in 16-24 year olds, crucial for workforce planning for our ageing workforce.
- An outstanding reputation as an exemplar employer with increases in requests to hold workshops in schools and take part in events like Ambition Barnsley.
- Requests for our apprentices to talk to other young people in schools or on video - 4 Apprentices were filmed for the IKIC ('I Know I Can') website, to inspire young people from all backgrounds to consider the benefits of apprenticeships.

We hold annual celebration of achievement events, hosted by our Chair of the Board and our Chief Executive. This is to acknowledge the commitment staff have shown towards gaining qualifications. These are informal events with lunch provided where certificates are presented to the successful learners, and which give opportunities for our Board and Senior Management to express their appreciation of our employees' achievements.

In addition, we have a number of awards at our annual staff conference, including Craft Apprentice of the Year, Mentor of the Year, and Office Apprentice of the Year (open to all our office based apprentices), evaluated in partnership with a Board Director

Throughout the year, we promote lots of apprenticeship opportunities by attending job fairs, school career events, Ambition Barnsley and recently we held some Mentoring Circles sessions, which is a new initiative we are working on with Barnsley Job Centre to prepare young people for the world of work.

Please follow the link to an article from this year showing what sort of things we do in more detail. <https://www.berneslaihomes.co.uk/spreading-word-apprenticeships/>

## Dan Crossley, Berneslai Homes

**Category: Professional Services**

**Year: 2015**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

A vocational route was a perfect fit for me at the time and the chance to work with skilled tradesmen and learn from them alongside college over a long period of time was very appealing. I feel experience is key and you don't get many opportunities in construction to be able to get hands on, make mistakes and learn from them. Also job security with a reputable organisation appealed to me too.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I progressed into a full-time Gas Plumbers Role, Site Supervisor, Operations Manager and am now in an Interim Asset Managers position.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

College was most challenging for me as I didn't like classroom work at that age.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Learning new skills and being able to put them into practice was so rewarding. I can still remember piping up my first boiler and being proud of the job I had completed.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Embrace the amazing opportunity, take on any challenges you can and learn the positives from the skilled tradesmen around you and form your own style of working which will shape your future career.

*Any other comments?*

Just that I am forever grateful for the opportunities I have been given, and the amazing people I have had the pleasure of learning from throughout my career within our amazing organisation - Berneslai Homes.

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**“Embrace the amazing opportunity, take on any challenges you can and learn the positives from the skilled tradesmen around you.”**

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City of  
**BRADFORD**  
METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

## Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Bradford Council's apprenticeship programme has been in place for a number of years. However, due to the new apprenticeship reforms of the Apprenticeship Levy and Government Public Sector Target the Council changed its programme from May 2017 to convert any Band 7 and below vacancies into apprenticeships wherever possible, as well as using the Levy to upskill existing staff through apprenticeship training. The apprenticeship programme also includes maintained schools that fall under Bradford Council.

From May 2017 we have had a total of 561 apprenticeships start within the Council/maintained schools and we currently have 237 live apprentices as of today's date. Numbers have slowed down recently due to COVID-19.

We have an internal awards ceremony which has a category for Apprentice of the Year (doesn't include up-skilling staff) and we have currently entered The Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2020 with the National Apprenticeship Service.

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## Cardiff Council

The trainee programme that Louis completed was planned to give the two trainees experience in a wide range of disciplines including drainage, street lighting, street mason and high speed routes as well as an opportunity to gain an understanding of associated teams and office based activities. To date we have only had one cohort and we are proud of the nomination Louis received in recognition of the work that he had undertaken.

### Challenges to the Council in providing the programme

Due to the varied nature of the placement, it has not been possible to create a formal apprenticeship or attract central council funding to cover the costs of the programme as the trainees do not gain a recognised qualification to support their work based experience. The period of training is also beyond the recognised structure that would attract funding. Regrettably, without additional funding to support the programme, it has not been possible to fund further intakes.

### Benefits to the Council of the apprentice programme

The training programme provided a fixed term of employment to two young individuals as the Council recognises the importance of supporting youth opportunities and how a skilled workforce contributes to the long term viability of the local economy. While permanent employment with the Council following the training programme could not be guaranteed, it was intended that the wide range of skills provided would stand the trainees in good stead for their future careers. One trainee (Louis) has since gained full-time permanent employment within the highway operations team and is showing ambition to progress. The Council has a multi-skilled employee that understands the needs of the organisation. The other gained has employment based on the skills and training received through the programme and will be of benefit to the wider economy.

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**CLACKMANNANSHIRE**  
**COUNCIL**

## Clackmannanshire Council

Clackmannanshire Council have had an apprenticeship programme for well over 25 years. Over the years our numbers within the trade apprenticeships have varied with the minimum being 6 and the maximum being 16. The trades that we are involved with are carpentry and joinery, plumbing, painting and decorating, plastering, roofing and electrical.

We have won the APSE Housing and Building Apprentice of the Year twice but have had numerous finalists over the years, some of whom are still with the Council. One of our winners - Callum Bonner who won APSE Apprentice of the Year in 2019 - has won various awards. If it had not been for the apprenticeship programme then these would never have happened.

### Challenges to the Council in providing the programme

There are other trades that we would like to consider employing apprentices in but lack of colleges providing the training causes a problem.

### Benefits to the Council of the apprentice programme

Recognised by Council Leaders as a worthwhile investment, apprenticeship schemes provide good PR value for the Council and provide excellent opportunities for young people of Clackmannanshire. The scheme also allows for employee retention as we hope that we can offer permanent positions to the apprentices at the end of their apprenticeships and we know that they are trained to meet our high standards.

### Any other comments?

Better promotion along with case studies of APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards would be beneficial to help make it a more recognised brand and will hold more value with employees.

Previously I have mentioned that if Callum Bonner had not been offered an apprenticeship then he would never have had the opportunity to experience some of the things in his life that he has done. Through the apprenticeship programme he worked hard and became a member of Worldskills UK which opened up many wonderful opportunities for him as a Competitor and for myself as an Employer.

Along with Callum being APSE Apprentice of the Year 2019 he has achieved the list below:

- Winner of the Medallion of Excellence at Worldskills, Russia, 2019
- Team UK Member for Worldskills, Russia 2019
- Winner of the British Education Awards 2019 for Vocational Training in Scotland
- Winner of Apprentice of the Year for Clacks Business Awards 2018
- Team UK Member for Euroskills, Budapest, 2018
- Outstanding Student of the Year Award for Forth Valley College 2018
- Recognition and Certificate of Achievement from Council Leaders at Clackmannanshire Council
- Winner of SAPCT Advanced Level Painting and Decorating 2018
- Worldskills “send-off” at Houses of Parliament with the then MP for Skills Minister Anne Milton
- Personal invitations to meetings by MP Luke Graham
- National and local newspaper articles, articles in TES (formerly known as the Times Educational Supplement), Crown Paints etc magazines

The list goes on but this is what apprenticeships can lead to.

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**“Recognised by Council Leaders as a worthwhile investment, apprenticeship schemes provide good PR value for the Council and provide excellent opportunities for young people of Clackmannanshire.”**

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## Daniel Brierley, Derbyshire County Council

**Category: Highways and Street Lighting**

**Year: 2013**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I was always told that the Council was a job for life. A place where you can grow and get the opportunities you deserve. It was my Grandad that pushed me and it's been the best advice I've ever had for my career.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since the APSE Awards I have tried to push myself each year which had included promotions from a Maintenance Charge Hand post into a Project Charge Hand role which I'm currently doing now. I'm also filling in as an assistant to the Contracts Manager when needed. This is a brilliant learning curve and gives me the experience I need to get to supervisor level.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The apprenticeships can be challenge with juggling education and in my case physical days work. I was supported by my manager in getting study days which helped greatly. I do like a challenge so I carried on my education years after my apprenticeship while I was in the right routine. I received my HNC in the built environment, so it may have been challenging at the start but it helped me progress as the years went by.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding aspect of my apprenticeship was all the knowledge and experience I gained. I had worked with individuals that had been doing the job for 25 years and I also gained modern knowledge from the education side of the apprenticeship.

I feel that you need a good balance of knowledge and experience when in a workplace and sometimes jumping into a job or simply studying doesn't give you all that you need, an apprenticeship supplies both of these, whilst also earning a wage.

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

To anyone that's just starting an apprenticeship, I'd advise to take a step back in the early stages and watch the experts at work. Gain knowledge from those that have worked there the longest. Take it seriously and remember that this could be the start of a career that you will be doing for the rest of your life, like myself. Always ask questions to gain knowledge and remember that if you make mistakes, you will only learn from them so always try your best and give it a go. Take the education aspect seriously and achieve those grades. It all helps for the future.

You do get back what you put in. I feel that I dropped lucky getting the apprenticeship but once I had gained my position, I made sure that I made the most of it. I hope the future provides more promotions and I could then start looking at hiring my own apprentices.

I've helped out with open days, telling my story to help people decide if it's the journey they want to start. I've also mentored apprentices in my team and through the early stages of their career. It's very rewarding as I know how it feels to take those first steps. •



## Dan Kayleigh Fisher, Dudley MBC

**Category: Horticultural**

**Year: 2015**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

After leaving school I went into further education via the A-Level route. But this didn't work out for me and I ended up leaving college and working full-time in retail. The problem had been I hadn't really known what I had wanted to do so I went with what seemed to be what I should do. This was back in 2003 and as far as I know apprenticeships were not promoted as widely in schools. I was encouraged to take the 'academic' route as I had GCSEs A- C.

So after a few years I decided I wanted to train and learn a trade, I started looking to see what was available and I came across the apprenticeship by chance really. The Council were one of the few employers at the time I found that would support an 'older' learner (I was 23 at this stage). Obviously being older the pay was important and this apprenticeship offered NMW.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I was nominated for the APSE Apprentice of the Year twice and shortlisted twice. I was also Apprentice of the Year in 2012 at my place of study. After the 4 year apprenticeship ended I was offered a permanent position as a craft mechanic working in the mower repair workshop. I was extremely proud of this as I had learnt the trade my scratch and achieved my higher level diploma in land based service engineering – which is the equivalent of A levels.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

An apprenticeship isn't just in the workplace. I had day release to college once a week. I found returning to college after being out of education for a few years a challenge at first. But I also had the opportunity to get my functional skills qualifications which was a great opportunity to refresh my skills and get back into the 'academic' side of things.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

For me it was seeing my colleagues' confidence grow in me over the years. When I first started people would not approach me with issues or they wouldn't be confident in abilities when I would undertake repairs. Yet by the time I moved into my new position last year I felt like a valued and trusted member of the team. Colleagues would even ask for me personally to undertake repairs for them. I'm obviously very proud of my qualifications but for me this was the real indication of how far I had come.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

There is no stigma around apprenticeships the way there seemed to be when I left school. It is a great way to gain qualifications and put your skills into action as you go.

I also believe if you work hard and you want to progress even further the opportunity will be there for you. I have since moved into a new position with my intention to move into a management position. I believe I have had these opportunities because of the effort I put into my apprenticeship is remembered.

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**“There is no stigma around apprenticeships the way there seemed to be when I left school. It is a great way to gain qualifications and put your skills into action as you go.”**

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## East Dunbartonshire Council

### Paul Don, East Dunbartonshire Council

**Category: Professional services**

**Year: 2016**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

Being able to give back to the communities I have been a part of for all my life was something that I thought was an exciting challenge and also to have a better understanding of what the Council actually do. When you are a young person living in an area, you don't actually realise how much the Council does for you and everyone else, so I thought this was a great chance to develop my education and experience by working in such a multi-function organisation.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since winning the Professional Services Award I was runner up in the Scottish APSE Apprentice Awards and I have progressed in my career by earning myself a full-time (permanent) job as a Project Manager for East Dunbartonshire Council.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of my apprenticeship was trying to win over the respect of contractors/consultants/engineers. Going into high profile meetings - on behalf of the Council - to make sure that the design team/contract were all working to my decision making and my instruction was tough. This was challenging because I could feel people judging my ability due to my age. That said, even though these were challenging, I also enjoyed and even thrived whilst under pressure.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part of my apprenticeship was seeing the impact on the community that my projects had. For example, I was involved in three new primary schools, three nurseries, a sports facility and a community centre. To see the faces of the users enjoying their new facility and knowing that they will be able to grow/learn and achieve so much in the buildings that I was part of is something that makes all the challenges/problems worthwhile.

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**“To see the faces of the users enjoying their new facility and knowing that they will be able to grow/learn and achieve so much in the buildings that I was part of is something that makes all the challenges/problems worthwhile.”**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Don't think twice about it, throw yourself into the deep end and embrace every moment, even the tough times as these will steady you for future events that will come your way. Do not settle for just being 'an apprentice' - everyone started their professional journey somewhere and this is the start of yours' •



## East Riding of Yorkshire Council

East Riding of Yorkshire Council have offered apprenticeships for over 15 years in a variety of sectors from Business Administration to Vehicle Maintenance. In 2010, a formal Apprenticeship Strategy was agreed by Cabinet which demonstrated the Council's commitment to developing our workforce. With a shortage of younger workers, failure to address the age profile of the workforce could have had a significant impact on future delivery of service and apprenticeships were identified as an effective route way into employment, especially for young people.

The strategy was designed to ensure managers were aware of the Council's approach to apprenticeships, their role in supporting the strategy and the valuable contribution that apprentices could make to organisational performance. It illustrated a firm commitment to the identification of apprentice posts for apprenticeships and to ensuring appropriate training and support was in place. With the advent of the Apprenticeship Levy, the apprenticeship programme has grown from strength to strength and now existing staff have been able to take advantage of the benefits that apprenticeship training can bring. From an average of 40 apprentices at any one time, the Council now supports over 220 including a minimum of 4 apprentices within the Fleet Management Team at any one time.

### Challenges to the Council in providing the programme

We have a strong track record of delivering good quality services, very effectively managing our finances and maintaining good performance, particularly through the recent and unprecedented period of change and uncertainty experienced in local government. The pressure on resources, brought about by the largest public sector budget cuts in history, has been immense and at a time of continuing increases in demand has had a dramatic impact on ability of services to fund new apprenticeship job opportunities and salaries. The introduction of the Levy has brought positives but at the same time, new standards have taken time to embed and it has been difficult to identify suitable providers to meet our needs.

### Benefits to the Council of the apprentice programme

The Council's apprenticeship offer has undoubtedly helped to raise the profile of the Council as an attractive employer and numbers of applicants for posts continue to rise - in particular for the Fleet Management Team. The calibre of candidates is

extremely high and their skills and knowledge are enhanced even further by the apprenticeship qualifications and support from training providers as well as experienced and trained Council staff. The majority of apprentices (88%) secure employment with the Council either during or on completion of their apprenticeship and many have progressed throughout the Council too.

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**“The majority of apprentices (88%) secure employment with the Council either during or on completion of their apprenticeship and many have progressed throughout the Council too.”**

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## Ben Conman, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

### Category: Transport and Vehicle Maintenance

Year: 2014

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

One of the biggest draws to the Council was the massively varied fleet that I would be working on. To be able to gain experience on repairing and maintaining anything from a push lawn mower to a dust cart and everything in between appealed a lot.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I have qualified NVQ Level 3 in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair. I am a qualified MOT tester and have a HGV class 2 license. I have also been put through various training course including fork lift, Schmidt calibration (gritter body), Terberg (bin lifts on the back of dust carts) and Tachograph Calibration. My current role is Vehicle Technician, and occasionally Stand-in Supervisor when required.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The jump from leaving school, to what felt like a different, alien environment was tough. Starting to carry out repairs that could have had terrible consequences if carried out incorrectly felt like a huge responsibility, even when being supervised initially.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part of the apprenticeship was developing a new skill or gaining extra knowledge to be able to carry out a repair or diagnose a fault that I previously couldn't do. But with the varied fleet we have, and how quickly new vehicles are

changing and progressing, there will always be another skill to learn and knowledge to gain.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

My advice to anyone just starting out on an apprenticeship is to stick to it. It can be very overwhelming when starting out, and feels like there is so much to learn. Also, try to gain as much experience or training as they can or get offered.

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**“My advice to anyone just starting out on an apprenticeship is to stick to it.”**

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## Fife Council

Fife Council has over 100 apprentices mainly with Building Services. Fleet Operations has a rolling programme of 8 apprentices who are at different stages of their apprenticeships. The Council invests significant financial resources into the apprenticeship programme and where possible we try to retain the apprentices once fully qualified. However if they move on we provide as much support as possible. This has allowed Fleet to manage succession planning and when highly skilled mechanics retire they are replaced by competent and newly trained mechanics.

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**“The Council invests significant financial resources into the apprenticeship programme and where possible we try to retain the apprentices once fully qualified.”**

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Fleet also participates in Fife Council's Annual Apprentice Awards scheme. The event is sponsored by Council suppliers and manufacturers where senior management and Elected Members attend. A key theme of the evening is to raise money for local charities.

Apprentices have an agreed training plan and are encouraged to produce an individual portfolio within their 4 year apprenticeship.

## Alastair McLean, Fife Council

### Category: Building Skills

**Year: 2015**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

My main reason for applying for an apprenticeship with Fife Council was that I felt that opportunity had passed me by and that I had no future. I wanted to feel that I had purpose and to achieve personal goals. Joinery was a hobby I really enjoyed so I grabbed the opportunity with both hands and showed what I could do.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I have completed my apprenticeship which I really enjoyed. I have gained more experience in my trade, I have just recently started a charge hand role which I am really looking forward to.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of the apprenticeship for me was my age, I was a mature apprentice and at the beginning was worried about fitting in. It was a bit difficult with the age gap of other apprentices but I was quite lucky because the apprentices within the Council and my college class were a good group.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part for me was seeing where I had come from - a feeling that I had messed up and that opportunities had passed me by - to achieving so much in a small space of time. I learned an awful lot about my trade and in life skills; this is a credit to all the tradesmen and supervisors who have supported me along the way. To then being the tradesman teaching an apprentice is very rewarding. I have also gained the knowledge and experience to do personal projects such as building an extension to the back of my house.

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**“I have also gained the knowledge and experience to do personal projects such as building an extension to my house.”**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

The advice I would give is to take the opportunity with both hands, listen to journeyman, enjoy the apprenticeship and put yourself forward for every opportunity that comes. Some may seem challenging but all are very rewarding.

*Any other comments?*

I have enjoyed my joinery apprenticeship with Fife Council. It has been varied in terms of different aspects of joinery. It has literally changed my life in many ways and has given me experience and confidence for which I am very grateful. I have experienced so much along the way. I enjoyed my APSE experience and would recommend it to anyone.

## Derry Lever, Fife Council

**Category: Professional Services**

**Year: 2015**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I was currently working as a tradesman on reduced hours so as to attend college full-time with Fife Council, having previously undertaken an apprenticeship with the Council. I knew that the training and development support was of an excellent standard.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since the Award I have completed my university studies and have received a full-time position as a fully qualified QS working on various different work streams.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part would have been finding the hours outside of work to fit in study time and also make time for my young family. Looking back I am not quite sure how I managed this but here we are.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Gaining new knowledge with each individual project that I was involved with, the QS profession is forever evolving and to this day I am learning.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Solid apprenticeships are the foundation blocks to successful careers, personal endeavour will bring success and future opportunity.

## Declan Brown, Fife Council

**Category: Horticultural**

**Year: 2016**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

The selling point to an apprenticeship with the Council was the possibility of earning a wage, gaining vital life experience while also being able to be educated in a certain skill set. I was very fortunate to work alongside hard working, skilled tree surgeons who had various backgrounds I could tailor my own personality to. The reason for choosing the Council was down to its security and after the interview it was clear that the Council was keen to push individuals forward to receive training, further



education and to make progress. As an ambitious teenager you can imagine that piqued my interest in doing an apprenticeship.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

After winning the Award I went on to take a full-time position as an arborist within Fife Council. I worked closely alongside the tree officer and often assisted him in writing reports, doing tree inspections as well as being involved in the hands on aspects of the job (removing/dismantling dangerous trees, tactical pruning). I subsequently left the Council to pursue and broaden my knowledge within the industry becoming a freelancer in the north of Scotland. I've worked alongside individuals who have experience working in New Zealand, Austria, Sweden as well as a host of areas within the UK. This experience has been a humbling one, reminding me that there is far more to learn than what I ever imagined as a moody teenager. I continue to work, learn and adapt to new ways of working within the industry, to new techniques and also to various new equipment as well.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

We had a unique situation of a conflict within our industry and the management. Seeing how this was resolved was a completely unique situation, one of which I had never faced before at school or doing voluntary work. I guess the challenges of being an apprentice is you are faced with the working environment, an area that is completely alien to you when you first start. It really can feel like a sink or swim situation at the beginning. That being said, I'm very grateful for being exposed to these challenges so early on in my working career. I'm convinced that the makeup of my personality is built around adapting to these challenges, identifying how to overcome them and making the necessary changes to any similar situation that arises in the future.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

We could have a short-medium length book if I write all the rewards that came from a successful apprenticeship so I'll just mention the one in detail that really stands out above all else. The work/learning experience is one of the truly most advantageous career paths any young individual could ever ask for. To have time to learn the necessary skills, to be able to do the "school work" while also having the hands on experience is an extremely satisfying way to learn.

I mentioned earlier that I was fortunate enough to have come across individuals of all different backgrounds within the Council and really that in itself was a reward. I had very supportive individuals around me, I had a tree officer who was keen for me to make progress and ensure I got every opportunity to continue to grow as an arborist. I had a college instructor who was excellent at spelling out everything to me. I also had Elaine

who took an interest in the expansion of my training, not only giving me the opportunity to have a voice and a say at these Awards but who also gave me the confidence in what I was doing.

I was blessed in many ways to have these individuals around me who supported me and helped me not only learn the industry I worked in but also the organisation I was part of. I've learned a massive amount of knowledge on how tree surgery is practiced on a much grander scale than I could ever have comprehended by becoming a freelancer. But none of that really would have been possible had it not been for these individuals building me up at the start of my career. I often reminisce about the good experience I had during my apprenticeship at the Council.

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**"I was blessed in many ways to have these individuals around me who supported me and helped me not only learn the industry I worked in but also the organisation I was part of."**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

My advice to someone just starting an apprenticeship is to completely immerse yourself in it. Do anything and everything to extend yourself. Stick close to your instructor and those helping to develop your career. Don't develop a proud, 'know it all' attitude just because you have a couple of years' experience. Be courageous in your development and don't let anything get in the way of learning. Above all else enjoy it. Enjoy the atmosphere, the work, the education and everything in-between.

## Calum Love, Fife Council

**Category: Building Skills**

**Year: 2018**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I initially wanted to have a career with Fife Council for many reasons. I felt that Fife Council were a great local employer to learn a trade with. I have friends and family who work with Fife Council and have always heard positive feedback about how they support you as an employee.

I was also very interested in stone masonry and the work that's involved in the trade. Working with Fife Council allowed me to work on local public and historic buildings in my local community. It felt so good to have played my part in restoring and maintaining my local heritage which is always so rewarding and I knew working with Fife Council would allow me to do this.

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**“It felt so good to have played my part in restoring and maintaining my local heritage which is always so rewarding and I knew working with Fife Council would allow me to do this.”**

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I also felt working with Fife Council that the training involved regarding the health and safety of me and others would be the best I could receive. This training involved asbestos awareness, manual handling, working at heights, abrasive wheels etc.

All these things I knew before applying for a position with Fife Council. So applying and gaining an apprenticeship was a dream come true for me.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since 2018 I have won overall Apprentice of the year with Fife Council. This was great for me as I was in my last year of my apprenticeship and it was great to be acknowledged for all the hard work and passion I have shown over the years.

My main goal since starting my apprenticeship was always to become a fully qualified stonemason working with Fife Council. I'm happy to say I have achieved both. I passed my skills test in 2019 and then was offered a position as a qualified stonemason. So it's great to feel part of something I am passionate about working in my local community alongside Fife Council.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

One of the most challenging things during my apprenticeship was at the beginning. I was still going through maintenance chemotherapy to fight against leukemia. I was in remission but still receiving oral chemotherapy every day. I was over the moon about being chosen to gain an apprenticeship with Fife Council despite my situation. I still had a few confidence issues at this point yet I really wanted to impress for getting an opportunity like this. So when I wouldn't pick up knowledge or skills involving my trade as quickly as I wanted to I would stress myself out. I just wanted to be amazing straight away and I know that rushing things invariably leads to failure. I wish looking back I would listen more and try not to stress too much. I'm glad I had the passion but I felt maybe that I would work myself up to a point where I underestimated my ability. But I know now that it all comes in time and people do make mistakes.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

I have had many rewarding parts in my apprenticeship. A few that definitely come to mind are some of the stones I have produced at college. Starting off at college and cutting stone for the first time was very difficult for me to grasp. But through the

years seeing myself grow in confidence and producing a variety of difficult stones was so rewarding. Some of these stones take a lot of patience and if one thing goes wrong during cutting of the stone you may have to start the process again. I have actually taken what I have learnt at college and produced a turret stone for St. Andrew's Museum. This was the most difficult stone to cut to date. Once it was finished and built on I was so proud of myself.

It was also great to represent Fife Council in the National APSE awards. This was great for my confidence and winning both the Scottish and the UK awards during my apprenticeship will always be one of my greatest accomplishment.

But overall gaining a full-time position as a qualified stonemason with Fife Council will always be my most rewarding. All the hard work I have put in over the 4 years feels like it has paid off and I'm glad to see a future for myself working with Fife Council.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

The advice I would give would be that it's very important to be passionate about what trade you work in. You will also pick up knowledge and skills from your colleagues through the years. Whether it's a labourer, apprentice, tradesman, supervisor etc it's important to listen to the advice they give you. I have learnt loads from all different people I have worked with and this has helped me grow in my trade. You will also make mistakes and it's important to pick yourself up from them and learn from it. As long as you are hardworking and passionate and willing to learn then you will grow and become a great part of your company and trade.

*Any other comments?*

I'm now looking forward to the future working with Fife Council. I'm looking to expand my knowledge and skills by taking the lead in certain projects that are coming up in the future. I have been working alongside a new apprentice that has just gained a position with Fife Council. I'm looking forward to helping him grow his passion, knowledge and skills in this great trade.

## **Ryan Fair, Fife Council**

**Category: Housing and Building: Mechanical and Electrical**

**Year: 2018**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

While I was looking for an apprenticeship in the construction industry I enrolled on a local college course to gain knowledge and experience of the industry. After completion I contacted my

local council and local plumbing companies in my area, sending in my CV and completing application forms. I soon realised the private sector bodies were facing financial difficulties as a number of apprentices who were in the later stages of their apprenticeships were paid off and struggled to complete their apprenticeships. This weighed heavily on my decision to gain my apprenticeship with a local council as the prospects were more secure. After looking into the Fife Council apprenticeship programme I soon realised how well structured, beneficial and rewarding the programme was so I subsequently applied for an apprenticeship with my local authority.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since successfully completing my apprenticeship I have been working as a competent tradesman in the property section of Fife Council (e.g. Schools, Community Centres and Care Homes etc.) This has enabled me to continue improving my hand skills and expanding my knowledge of the plumbing industry.

I also recently completed a renewables college course at Fife College, fully funded by my employer. I also have conducted presentations in local Fife high schools at "Apprenticeship Week" for Skills Development Scotland. Passing on the experience of my 4 year apprenticeship and explaining the benefits of becoming a tradesperson. Most recently I have been working during the COVID-19 outbreak keeping local infrastructure maintained and completing emergency work, seeing first hand the effects in the local communities and in care homes within Fife. I am carving a successfully career as a plumber and always looking for ways to progress within my trade.

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**"Most recently I have been working during the COVID-19 outbreak keeping local infrastructure maintained and completing emergency work, seeing first hand the effects in the local communities and in care homes within Fife."**

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*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of my apprenticeship was gaining employment as a plumbing apprentice. Initially after being unsuccessful this made me even more determined. After three attempts I was successful and grasped the opportunity with both hands.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

There are several rewarding parts of my apprenticeship and so it is hard to only name one. For me, being able to complete a job to a high standard and seeing the gratitude shown on the tenants' faces was extremely rewarding. Winning several accolades both

locally and nationally was also greatly rewarding as each year of my apprenticeship I worked extremely hard both at college and on site.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

My advice would be, work hard each day as four years seems a long time but trust me it flies by. Ask questions and don't be afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes are how we learn and how we are able to overcome and find solutions. Lastly - enjoy it!

*Any other comments?*

I Personally have loved being part of the APSE events, meeting new people and sharing experiences within our industry. The Apprentice of the Year Awards is also a great way to reward all the hard work each apprentice puts in on a daily basis. I would like to show my appreciation as each year I attended the Awards it was a roaring success. •



## KWL (Kingstown Works Limited)

Kingstown Works Limited (KWL) commenced trading in 2007 and predominantly delivers repairs, maintenance and improvement works and gas services to approx. 24,000 Hull City Council-owned dwellings

Being a locally based contractor, we have a genuine commitment to provide a service that is in the best interests of Hull which is demonstrated by 99% of employees living within the HU1-17 postal area.

We recognise the contribution of our 450 employees in achieving success for the business and being a valuable resource in delivering high quality services to our customers and clients.

KWL is one of the few construction providers who still invest in the recruitment and training of apprentices, thus enabling the skills base of the company to be constantly maintained to meet service needs and delivery.

Since 2007, KWL has recruited over 158 full-time apprentices the majority who are all trained to City & Guilds standards at NVQ Level 3 (Plasterer/Tilers are currently trained to Level 2). A further 10 apprentices will be recruited in 2020.

An outstanding achievement in the recruitment of apprentices is evident in KWL retaining 75% of all apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship.

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**“An outstanding achievement in the recruitment of apprentices is evident in KWL retaining 75% of all apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship.”**

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This has also seen several apprentices progressing from full-time tradespersons into supervisory posts.

### Challenges to the Council in providing the programme

The fall in younger persons entering construction has had a detrimental effect on the industry retaining the skills base.

This has been exacerbated somewhat by schools encouraging students to enter higher education rather than seek a career through an apprenticeship.

At KWL we experienced the effects of the revised CITB levy and their revised approach regarding not supporting the recruitment of electrical and mechanical trades and discontinuing the delivery of direct training.

A further challenge for KWL was attracting the right candidates. Traditionally, we approached local training providers to identify suitable applicants, but were disappointed with the standard who were presented for interview and some of the ones we eventually recruited.

In 2017 we reviewed our recruitment process and decided to hold an Open Day on a Saturday at our Kingswood premises where we could meet interested young persons on a one-to-one informal basis. Staff attended on a voluntary basis and nearly 70 potential recruits (and their families) attended and had the opportunity to discuss careers with KWL employees.

Subsequent open days has seen the number of potential recruits grow from 70 to 162 in 2019.

This has resulted in the company being in control of our selection and recruitment throughout the whole process and has led to an improved standard of applicant for the apprenticeship opportunities.

To overcome an operational challenge, we created a new Plasterer/Tiler post and liaised with a local training provider to recognise a certified standard. As KWL provide repair, maintenance and refurbishment there is not the opportunity to employ bricklaying apprentices and tradespersons. Therefore, there was a need for the plastering and additional tiling skills required to complete kitchen, bathroom and wet room installations.

There is scope to further improve apprentice recruitment, but this is dependent on workload stability that is at present not currently available from HCC Housing – partly due to a lack of planned works and partly due to budgets only being available one year at a time. •





## Fran Creaser, Kirklees Council

### Category: Highways and Street Lighting

Year: 2017

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I initially started working for Kirklees Council in 2004 as an apprentice in Business Administration. This is a role I stayed in for several years. Towards the end of my time as a Business Administrator I was working within the Highways Safety Department. This involved undertaking technical administrative duties such as managing the applications of disabled parking place markings and keeping clear markings. I also had involvement in refreshing white lining throughout the Kirklees district. This was my first insight into the engineering aspect of Kirklees Highways and it really interested me. I decided in 2015, at the age of 28 and after having 2 children, that I wanted a professional career and the opportunity arose for a trainee engineering role within Kirklees Highways. I jumped at the chance.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since winning the award I have successfully moved on to becoming a Senior Engineer within the Town Centre Design Team within Kirklees Council. I am part of a small team who dedicate their time to designing maintenance and redevelopment schemes throughout the town centres within the Kirklees district. I also have management duties now whereby I manage one of our trainee engineers. This management role is something I feel incredibly passionate about as I am managing staff who started out exactly where I did and I want to be able to give them as much guidance and knowledge to really encourage their personal growth within the engineering industry.

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**“The management role is something I feel incredibly passionate about as I am managing staff who started out exactly where I did and I want to be able to give them as much guidance and knowledge to really encourage their personal growth within the engineering industry.”**

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*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of the apprenticeship for me was studying for my qualifications whilst having a full-time job and 2 children at home. There were also roles within the training that I didn't particularly enjoy, but I knew it was part of the training process and I needed to get a feel for all of the different areas within the Highways Engineering department at Kirklees Council before I decided which area I would like to eventually settle into.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part was achieving all of my qualifications. I am trained up to HND Level in Civil Engineering and for me I felt that was a huge achievement and something I feel very proud of. I have also been involved in various campaigns within Kirklees to promote Women in Engineering and to try encourage more women into the industry. I was also recently invited into a Primary school to talk to the children about what a highways engineer does and give them an insight into my day-to-day job.

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**“I have also been involved in various campaigns within Kirklees to promote Women in Engineering and to try encourage more women into the industry. I was also recently invited into a Primary school to talk to the children about what a highways engineer does and give them an insight into my day-to-day job.”**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

The advice I would give would be to take in as much information as possible, ask as many questions as possible and never be afraid to ask for help! The engineering industry is vast and there is a lot of knowledge to take in and learn which can become very daunting but is also incredibly rewarding. •



## David Daff, Newcastle City Council

### Category: Highways and Street Lighting

Year: 2013

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

During my A-Level studies, teachers would constantly talk about the importance of university and the need to get there. It never interested me. I also wasn't fond of the idea of working in an office and liked the idea of working outside. I heard through a family friend that apprenticeships were being advertised at the Council and what it entailed and felt it was the perfect opportunity to get paid whilst learning a trade which I have for life as opposed to going to university and getting into debt!

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

From there, I was offered a permanent contract for a Mason at the Council which I gladly accepted. I then undertook my NEBOSH General Certificate Qualification and as of last year been promoted to supervisor for Highways maintenance. I am also currently undertaking a level 4 apprenticeship in management.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Travel! I shouldn't complain but due to my living location, I had to leave the house at 6.15am every day to walk to the train station for 6.40am and then to the depot for 7.30am. Even worse travelling to Ashington for college during block release.

On a more serious note, the biggest challenge was taking an every man for himself approach. When I started my apprenticeship, it was at the very beginning of austerity. Rather than being a class clown with others, I had my head down in modules to get ahead of the game with my units. This in turn enabled me to finish college way ahead of schedule.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The job satisfaction. As sad as it may sound, I genuinely loved laying flags and seeing the finished product did put a smile on my face (even if my back was breaking). And now years later, walking along with my family, pointing at areas in town saying "I did that".

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**"As sad as it may sound, I genuinely loved laying flags and seeing the finished product did put a smile on my face (even if my back was breaking). And now years later, walking along with my family, pointing at areas in town saying "I did that."**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Stick in. Stay focused. Impress your mentors and managers and show them what you can do. Yes it can be frustrating at times, but keep a happy focussed approach.

*Any other comments?*

I would honestly advise anyone to take an apprenticeship. Paid to learn and gain work experience. It's a career if you choose to make it one. I did and I have never looked back.

## Mitchell Galloway, Newcastle City Council

### Category: Professional Services

Year: 2015

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

The Council could provide a wide range of opportunities within their Architectural Construction Services department that supported new developments across the city as well as improving the Council's own portfolio of properties. I saw the learning potential if I could get involved in numerous schemes to be extremely rewarding and believed it would provide an excellent grounding for my future in the built environment sector.

*What have you achieved since winning the award?*

I went on to gain full employment at the Council in 2016 as a Senior Architectural Technician. After six months at this position I was appointed Assistant Project Manager within the Council's Major Projects Team working on some of the City's biggest capital investment projects. I gained promotion after a year as Assistant to a Full Project Manager.

My main daily duties consist of the delivery of Newcastle Helix, a leading site for research and innovation in the heart of Newcastle. I manage the daily co-ordination between contractors, design teams and clients to ensure the £350 million scheme is a success and achieves its objective to become a 24-acre testbed and collaborative ecosystem for public and private bodies that is unlike anything else in the UK.

I was also involved in the delivery of Stephenson's Rocket to The Discovery Museum in Newcastle for The Great Exhibition of The North. The first time the locomotive returned to Newcastle in 156 years. The exhibit was one of the most well attended attractions for the GEOTN.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

I always knew that the apprenticeship programme was there to support me if I did come into any challenges or complications. However, this was never necessary. The team around me was always there to ensure I felt comfortable in the environment I was working in and provided adequate opportunities for me to develop my skills in a variety of ways.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Without a doubt the most rewarding element of the apprenticeship was the diversity of the projects I was able to be involved with. From the renovation of the City's Black Gate and Castle Keep to the refurbishment of existing schools as well as adapting sports facilities to create world class practice space for international athletes. Although every project had its own challenges this was exciting and an opportunity to be involved in some great developments.

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**"The diversity of the projects was the most rewarding... The renovation of the City's black gate and Castle Keep to the refurbishment of existing schools as well as adapting sports facilities to create world class practice space for international athletes."**

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*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

An apprenticeship is about constantly learning and trying to get the most out of every experience, so I would always say ask as many questions as you can, keep a record of what you do and the challenges you face and learn from them. With time, practice and hard work you will always achieve what you want to as long as you've got the right mind set and the willingness to be the best you can.

*Any other comments?*

Having an Apprentice Manager who was there to support my journey through my learning both academically and at work was an essential element of getting to where I am today. I think that without someone looking after the apprentice's best interests sometimes you can get lost in the organisation's objectives as they don't always align.

## Carl Gray, Newcastle City Council

**Category: Highways and Street Lighting**

**Year: 2018**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

Two of my cousins had apprenticeships at the Council a good 5/6 years before me and had gained vast amounts of training before leaving to go to other companies. Their experience of the Council apprenticeships and the information they gave to me interested me in a Council apprenticeship. It was also knowledge that the Council provide services in the city I live and I wanted to be able to contribute to my city.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I am now an Assistant Traffic Signal Design Engineer. I gained this full-time post after finishing my apprenticeship. I received a Distinction\* in my BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma. Since then I have completed various different industry based training courses (Traffic Signal Design related). I also started a MSc in Transport Planning & Engineering in 2018, part time whilst working full-time still, which I will have completed come August 2020.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of the apprenticeship was understanding the complex traffic signal terminology, and the roles required to be undertaken to be a designer. The service provided by the Council is a regional service to several other local authorities in the north east; we provide a complete service from design to install unlike most other traffic signal design-based companies. This means there are many different processes to become competent in to be able to design work proficiently.

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**"I am now an Assistant Traffic Signal Design Engineer. I gained this full-time post after finishing my apprenticeship. I received a Distinction\* in my BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma."**

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*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part of the apprenticeship is the training provided, that gives a great platform to understand the fundamental principles in your respective field. Furthermore gaining full-time employment after my apprenticeship was very rewarding.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Work hard - you get out of an apprenticeship what you put in. Never be afraid to ask questions if you are unsure or just curious, as it is one of the best ways to learn and find out new information from more experienced colleagues. Always be proactive, take ownership of tasks and never sit back and wait for tasks to be given to you, this shows that you are interested and aren't just 'taking it easy', as it could be put. •



## Nottingham City Homes

Nottingham City Homes (NCH) manages around 27,000 homes in some of the most disadvantaged, culturally diverse and economically challenged areas of Nottingham. Making us the largest provider of social housing within the East Midlands. We have built a reputation for delivery and performance, and for putting our residents at the heart of everything we do.

As a "not for profit" organisation we reinvest the fruits of our endeavours for the benefit of local people. Through reinvestment, the local people we employ and the local business we support make a major contribution to the Nottingham economy.

Our 960 employees (Housing, Construction, Repairs & Maintenance, Support Services) are talented and committed to delivering the highest level of service – our traineeship and apprenticeship programmes provide an opportunity to "grow our own", plug skills gaps and ensure we have a diverse workforce that represents the communities we serve.

NCH's vision is 'to create homes and places people want to live', employability/learning and development plays a huge part in delivering this vision/corporate goals, particularly:

- To diversify our services, re-investing in our communities
- To be a great place to work

With an ageing workforce our traineeships/apprenticeships provide a talent pipeline. NCH are committed to retaining/developing staff through apprenticeships, reducing unemployment within Nottingham – impacting local economy and bridging the construction skills gap.

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**“With an ageing workforce our traineeships/ apprenticeships provide a talent pipeline. NCH are committed to retaining/developing staff through apprenticeships, reducing unemployment within Nottingham.”**

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In the last year, we've built our 500th new home as part of Building a Better Nottingham, the biggest council house building programme in a generation. We're also on the way to letting our 150th property to be rented privately to support people facing homelessness.



We're delivering an £8.5m fire safety enhancement programme across all our high rises following Grenfell, and we're achieving record levels of resident satisfaction. Our apprentices play an integral role in delivering all these projects – currently we have over 80 across various departments. Investing £1.5million annually, recently through partnership working with the City Council and Nottingham College, NCH has been awarded £1million from Construction Skills Fund via CITB/Department for Education to create a training center linking employers/new recruits into construction in Nottingham.

Our dedicated Employability Team and Apprentice Advisor support apprentices along with trained mentors and line managers: we do this via:

Over 30 years we have trained 400+ apprentices - 90% of trade apprentices gaining permanent employment. 40% of the employees currently working within the Construction, Repairs and Maintenance division are ex-apprentices – many progressing to managerial/leadership roles/apprenticeships now loyally mentoring apprentices themselves!

Our ethos is helping local people into work – particularly those furthest from the labour market. Our "Tenant Academy" targets social housing tenants, long term unemployed and under-represented groups giving people the confidence and opportunity to overcome whatever has held them back.

Our flagship employability project Next Steps supported 500+ unemployed residents in the last year through one-to-one employment support that's tailored to individual needs.

We have delivered sector based work academies including accredited training and guaranteed job interviews, as well as traineeships in construction/customer service. In 2018/19, we supported 21 unemployed tenants into NCH vacancies including our apprenticeships.

Recognising that women were under-represented on our construction apprenticeships NCH established a "Women in Construction" programme (run by ex-NCH female apprentices) and through outreach work/ taster days over 100 local female residents have taken part 2018/19 - feedback an average is 10/10 for satisfaction. NCH subsequently recruited 16 new trade apprentices in 2018 - 7 participated in the taster workshops.

Promoting apprenticeship information on our web site, through local schools, community groups and careers fairs, we recruit in partnership with a local college who provide functional skills assessments on our behalf. Those individuals requiring further information, advice and guidance are supported/directed to alternative pathways/employers.

Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy our strategy around further education has changed and now all employees

who want to gain accredited qualifications are supported, where possible, to undertake a relevant apprenticeship. Every front line employee who enters our residents' home acts as an ambassador and is able to promote our apprenticeships.

Our apprentices act as role models/ ambassadors by:

- School visits to increase aspiration levels and provide insight into construction/housing careers (23 sessions delivered this year including construction workshops/mock interviews).
- Attending careers fairs/community events - PRIDE and Nottingham Caribbean Carnival to promote vacancies/benefits of apprenticeships.
- ADCN / AMBASSADOR NETWORK – attending The House of Commons
- A "Top 100 Apprentice Employer" 3 times since – 2011 and NAS/Brathay finalists 2015/2017 – this saw apprentices raising money for local charities, giving something back by refurbishing a local toy library – and promoting apprenticeships through local/social media. •



## Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Tameside Council has been taking on apprentice mason paviours for over 45 years with approx. 150 coming through the ranks in this period. During this time we've had apprentices who have won the college apprentice of the year awards. We've also been fairly successful with the APSE apprentice of the year awards having won it once and been runner up on a couple of occasions.

Challenges in recent years include finding a suitable college course for our apprentices to enrol upon. Back in the day we were fortunate to have the City and Guilds craft and advanced craft courses taught out of Manchester College of Building. This course, along with on-site training offered a solid grounding into the role and the skills required. Unfortunately for us times have changed somewhat and for a number of years the only courses available was an NVQ in general construction. This course wasn't ideal but it was better than nothing. We've since found a more suitable course but even this falls short of what we'd ideally like our apprentices to be enrolled on.

When we find an apprentice who is keen and shows ability this is obviously a benefit to the authority. Hopefully they stay with us and become a valuable asset in the future. We still have a least 30 members of staff and operatives who have come through the apprentice programme who have either moved into a management/supervisory role or are still young enough to be "on the tools". As far as Tameside MBC are concerned the apprenticeship scheme has definitely been a success.

## Francesca Lawton-Vaughan, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

**Category: Highways and Street Lighting**  
**Year: 2016**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

In a word, opportunity. At the time I had been to college straight from school studying Business Administration. But not followed on my studies to University. I had been managing my local pub for a small amount of time as the owners had ill health. I

knew it was only a matter of time until they left and I realised that I needed to better myself as professionally, find a job that I would find satisfaction in, build my knowledge and learn whilst working.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

I am still proudly working for Tameside MBC some 11 years later. I am now an Engineer within the Design and Delivery Team. My role at the moment is to project manage and deliver the carriageway maintenance / resurfacing programme for the Borough. This is a £20 million project delivered over 5 years and we are just heading into our 4th year. Alongside this I am tasked with estimating, designing and project managing special projects such as car parks and highway improvements. Both give me massive satisfaction when completed. Although challenges are faced I still learn and improve my skills from each task handed to me. In addition to this I recently have been tasked by our Assistant Executive Director to represent our service area as a future leader of the Service/Council. Alongside colleagues we were invited to London to take part in the OPE Challenge, which has since secured £100k funding to improve my local town centre. This is to be a starting point to improve the town centre as part of a future grant funded scheme that will address the local town centre issues such as, retail, access, housing and community.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

By far the interview. After the advertisement opening day, skills tests there was the dreaded interview. I know I'm not alone when I say they are the worst thing. I really struggled with my nerves ahead of the interview, and when I went in I was shaking. But I listened to each question and if I didn't understand I asked for it to be reworded. The most challenging part is selling yourself and well. Giving the best impression of yourself and being able to express your desire to get the job and prove that you are the right person for it. I came out of the interview knowing that an apprenticeship is right for me and regardless if I was to be unsuccessful I would pursue an apprenticeship elsewhere.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Learning on the job by far. To go into a role with no experience or knowledge of the subject to then to come out of it having learnt the role and gained qualifications. You gain so much from working on the job, sponging advice, information experiences from peers. You become part of a team, working alongside them, with help and advice at the drop of a hat.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Choose a career and go for it! Stick at it, I may seem hard at times, don't be afraid to ask questions or make mistakes. We're only human! Throughout my experience of being a modern apprentice I have been invested in through training and I have gained so many skills that I never thought I would have years ago. Sometimes an apprenticeship is a platform for greatness, use it wisely and succeed in becoming the best version of you.

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**“Throughout my experience of being a modern apprentice I have been invested in through training and I have gained so many skills that I never thought I would have years ago.”**

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*Any other comments?*

APSE! I think without the privilege to become an Apprentice / Trainee of the year I would not have had much confidence to achieve further. It's nice to be praised at work and get satisfaction from it. But to be recognised for your achievements from a national association is something else. Thank you for everything.



## **Samantha Smith, Telford and Wrekin Council**

**Category: Horticultural  
Year: 2014**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I decided to become an apprentice as a way to retrain in a new sector. I had been working in education for a few years and the college I was working for had announced job cuts, so I decided it was time to retrain and upskill. I was an older apprentice aged 23-24 with my own house and car to run, so I really needed to be earning an income rather than going back into education as a student. I had previously worked for a conservation charity and I really enjoyed working outside so that fuelled my search for an apprenticeship working in the environment sector.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

In the six years since the Apprentice of the Year Awards I have worked my way up through the ranks of the Parish Council, who were my work placement provider. Once my apprenticeship was over I was extremely lucky to be offered a job with Stirchley and Brookside Parish Council as a Seasonal Environmental Maintenance Officer. This was an extremely rewarding job where I was able to use my previous working skills to teach children and young people about planting bulbs, growing their own fruit and veg and the importance of looking after our environment. I enjoyed this role for around 2 years when another job became available within the Parish Council.

I applied and was successfully appointed as the Community Project Officer. This was a fantastic role that enabled me to build on the projects and relationships that I had previously been working on whilst also building positive community rapport and expand engagement with local people around Parish Council projects. I learnt so much during my time in this role and a few years later the time came for me to progress once again.

In 2017 a partner organisation was looking for a suitable person to become a Programme Coordinator for a 10 year Lottery-funded community project, which is where I am now. I work with residents on an estate in Telford to plan, develop and deliver

projects that local people want and need. It is a completely new way of working with ideas coming from the ground up. Projects range from environmental issues such as tackling fly tipping, setting up Telford's first community fridge (a project to stop surplus foods from going to landfill) and buying a house to create safe, supportive places to help people working through addictions to drugs and alcohol to get back onto their feet.

In the last 6 months I have employed two new members of staff to help me to deliver the programme, a Business Admin Apprentice and a Environmental Volunteer Officer who also undertook the same apprenticeship in the same role that I started in. I strongly believe in investing in apprentices and offering work to people who have proved they are hardworking during an apprenticeship.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

I loved my time as an apprentice. I think that I faced a couple of challenges whilst being an apprentice but saw these as something I had to overcome rather than a barrier to me doing the job. Firstly, as an older apprentice with financial responsibilities I needed to take an evening job as a youth worker to make sure that bills could be paid. The other big challenge I was faced with was being a female in a male dominated working environment – the first female apprentice in this role. I had to prove that I could physically do the job as well as the guys I was working with. This wasn't a negative, however, as since my time as an apprentice I am aware of at least 2 other young ladies who have been successful apprentices within similar roles at the Council.

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**“The other big challenge I was faced with was being a female in a male dominated working environment – the first female apprentice in this role... since my time as an apprentice I am aware of at least 2 other young ladies who have been successful apprentices within similar roles at the Council.”**

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*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part of my apprenticeship was making lasting friendships with local people. Sometimes, my team were the only people that some of our older residents saw week to week, it was really nice to feel that we were making a difference in somebodies life. I still have close friendships with many of these people from my time as an apprentice. As an apprentice it was also fantastic to see the physical and social difference that we were able to make.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

My advice would be not to be overwhelmed when you start the paperwork side of the apprenticeship work. If you don't understand ask questions, you are not the only person unsure. Also, stick at your apprenticeship work and try to see the positives and think long term about the opportunities that will come once you have completed your apprenticeship.

*Any other comments?*

I just want to thank the Council members that put me forward for Apprentice of the Year 2014 Awards. It really has helped me to open so many doors in life and develop my career into something really amazing. I would never have imagined that I would be heading up such an important and needed community project just four years after my apprenticeship had ended. •





## Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

Every year we have apprentices winning awards from training providers, and in 2015 we were awarded Top 100 Apprenticeship Employer.

We have never seen employing apprentices as a challenge. However, there is now more competition from other employers so we are making more use of social media and taking part in more promotional events to advertise our offer. We offer a variety of apprenticeships and therefore we deal with a large number of training providers making procurement and contract management time consuming.

We don't rely on training providers to carry out the training, we have a dedicated in-house team that oversees the apprentices learning throughout their programme which includes extra training over and beyond their programme, job swaps, site visits to different parts of the Council etc. All this enriches the programme and makes the apprentice well rounded by the end of it, resulting in over 90% gaining employment, usually within the Council

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**“We don't rely on training providers to carry out the training, we have a dedicated in-house team that oversees the apprentices learning throughout their programme which includes extra training over and beyond their programme, job swaps, site visits to different parts of the Council etc.”**

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West Lothian Council

## Thomas McNee, West Lothian Council

**Category: Highways and Street Lighting**  
**Year: 2012**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I Initially started working for the Roads department on a “get ready for work” scheme. During this time I developed an aptitude for it and enjoyed going in to work every day. The guys I worked with were great with me and made me feel part of the team and in return I worked harder and was more enthusiastic. When apprenticeships were made available I knew this was the career I wanted to pursue and I have been proven right.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since winning the Award I have achieved quite a lot:

- I gained my SVQ2 in Roads.
- I gained a HNC in Civil Engineering.
- I am currently going into my third year at University where hopefully I will achieve my degree in Civil Engineering.
- I have been promoted 3 times from:  
Roadworker>Chargehand>Squad Leader>Roads Officer.
- I am currently a Roads officer managing between 20-30 operatives on a day to day basis.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most challenging part of the apprenticeship was the log book and ensuring I was accurately recording my day. This was however a very small contribution for what I achieved in return and the opportunities given to me.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

Achieving my awards was the most rewarding part for me and was a good reward for the hard work I had put in the couple of years previous. It also gave me the confidence that I could go on and achieve so much more.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Do the basics well and it will be a great springboard for years to come. By that I mean don't be afraid to be the first out the van in the morning and the last in at night. Be enthusiastic, ask questions to the point you feel you are a pest because this is the only way to learn. If you give 100% you'll get 100% in return.

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**“Don't be afraid to be the first out the van in the morning and the last in at night. Be enthusiastic, ask questions to the point you feel you are a pest because this is the only way to learn.”**

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*Any other comments?*

Never underestimate the power of hard work and enthusiasm.

## Fraser Keast, West Lothian

**Category: Highways and Street Lighting**

**Year: 2013**

*What made you consider an apprenticeship with the Council?*

I worked in the private sector after leaving school which was difficult due to travel and pay, and was always looking for other opportunities. I found an advert in the local paper for West Lothian Council taking on a range of apprentices. The only one I was interested in however was becoming a road worker. Family members already worked within the Council, including my mother who told me how good conditions and opportunities are.

*What have you achieved since winning the award and what is your current role?*

Since competing at the APSE awards many years ago I have gone on to achieve my HNC in Civil Engineering. This enabled me to become a squad foreman on the frontline and provided me with vital experience for my current role of a Civil Engineering Technician. In my current role I now create designs for a range of projects within West Lothian Council's Maintenance team; including resurfacing, drainage, kerbing and barriers. My current role is helping in achieving my Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering as a Graduate apprentice. I have completed two of the four years already.

*What was the most challenging part of the apprenticeship and why?*

At the time I was undertaking my apprenticeship the most challenging part for me was completing my log book. The

Council had us complete a daily/weekly log book discussing what works we had done, what things we undertook on our own and taking on site photographs etc. As much as it was challenging I feel it helped me into the position I am in today which is a technical role. Before that I had not really looked at all aspects of a job in relation to health and safety or designs.

*What was the most rewarding part of the apprenticeship and why?*

The most rewarding part of the apprenticeship for me was being able to interact with and become friends with many different characters within West Lothian Council. I would meet Road Workers, Supervisors, Engineers and managers on a daily basis, this helped me with my communication skills as well as making lifelong friends.

*What advice would you give to people just embarking on an apprenticeship?*

Give it 100% commitment in everything that you do, from sweeping the road to laying kerbs, and hope that you have employers who see this and reward it. If it had not been for my commitment and attitude combined with West Lothian Council's ethos to train and continually develop their employees I would not have achieved half of what I have professionally.

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**“If it had not been for my commitment and attitude combined with West Lothian Council's ethos to train and continually develop their employees I would not have achieved half of what I have professionally.”**

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*Any other comments?*

As much as competing in APSE Apprentice of the Year Awards was additional work for me, it was a great experience and introduced me to a lot of people I am still in contact with and who help me professionally. I firmly believe that competing in these wards 2 years running helped me professionally within West Lothian Council, and I encourage any apprentice who feels they give 100% at their place of work to compete. •

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