

## Apprentices: Where are they now?

The apprentices from the Council's third intake to the scheme finished their two year programme in September 2010. During their time at Devon County Council, they have completed qualifications in Business and Administration, Customer Service or IT. Two and a half years down the line, what route has their career taken?

### Tom Bird



Whilst looking for employment I was shown various apprenticeship programmes by connexions but out of all of the apprenticeships on offer to me it was Devon County Council's one which appealed to me the most, so much so that it was the only one I applied for as none of the others could offer what Devon County Council could. The programme gave you a chance to apply for an apprenticeship position rather than apply to a specific role. We were given a chance to chat to various managers within the council first and then decide on which role we'd like to apply for, I found this really useful as each of the managers gave a good insight to what each job would entail.

After an informative meet and greet with the various managers from Devon County Council I decided to opt for the finance position and the ICT position as I felt I'd fit in well with either of the two teams. I was invited back for an interview for the finance role and after a second more formal interview I was offered a role within the council working in finance.

The first department I was in was Adult and Community Services, I was there for 6 months, my main responsibilities were processing invoices, reconciling spreadsheets and maintaining the petty cash. After the 6 months I was given a chance to see what the rest of the council had to offer so I was given a position in the Business and Specialist Support Services team, at first I was hesitant about moving as I was happy in ACS but after meeting my new manager and the team in BSSS I could see I had nothing to worry about. My role in BSSS still allowed me to do similar tasks from my ACS days but I was also introduced to budget monitoring which provided an interesting challenge. After 6 months in BSSS I was preparing to move onto a new department as planned, however as luck would have it, a full time position which suited what I wanted came up! So I applied for it, had the interview and was lucky enough to secure a permanent job with DCC after being on the apprenticeship programme for about a year. Since then I have moved to Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate, here I am involved in temporary road closures, car parking and the usual finance related work I have been used to throughout my time in DCC.

Over my two year apprenticeship I gained my business admin level 2 and 3 qualification, ECDL qualification and am currently undertaking my AAT qualification. As well as this I have also had the opportunity over the years to participate in many courses such as customer care course, assertiveness training, equality awareness, excel training and much more. The NVQ programme also gave me the chance along with my fellow apprentices to build a sensory garden for a local primary school, as most of the apprentices would agree this was a big highlight of the apprenticeship scheme as it gave us a chance to do something we wouldn't normally do and gave us the chance to give something back to the community.

I would recommend the programme to everyone who is looking for a job that will support your development and challenge you at the same time.

### Bryony Colbourne



My apprenticeship was based at My Devon Customer Service Centre in Tiverton. I have completed a level 2 apprenticeship qualification and am currently working towards completing level 3 in Customer Service. When I started at the CSC I took a wide range of calls such as general enquiries, waste and recycling, bus passes, Devon library service and adult and community learning courses. Since then I am now a permanent member of staff on the Roads and Highways team. I really enjoy working here as the work is so varied. In the future I would like to take on and complete more training and definitely look to progress within the County Council.

## Sarah Henson



I joined Devon County Council on the Apprenticeship Scheme in September 2008 on a two year placement within the Directorate Support Team in Corporate Resources. Coming from a background in retail this placement gave me experience of working in an office environment and helped me gain an increased understanding in administration and customer service.

In March 2010 I moved to the Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate on a 3 month secondment within Office Services. Here I took the role of administration assistant and found myself responsible for a number of duties, from sorting post to processing skip and scaffold licences. By June I was lucky enough to gain a permanent position within the team and I've been here ever since.

The part of my role which I enjoy most is probably skip and scaffold licensing however, this can also be the most stressful part too. The licensing requires me to liaise with different parties involved and requires good problem solving, organisation and communication skills. This role can be time consuming and demanding at times as it is often a task in itself to try and juggle it around the many other duties I am responsible for in a day. The aspect I enjoy most is the achievement of solving problems and when internal and external people are appreciative of the service I have provided.

I've now been working for Devon County Council for nearly two and a half years and feel that I have come such a long way since I first started. The Apprenticeship Scheme has given me the initial foot on the ladder and has made it possible for me to experience working in different office environments and gain confidence in my abilities. From being on the scheme I have gained NVQs in Business Administration (Levels 2&3) and Customer Service (Level 3). I have also attended many other training courses ranging from an Introduction to Equality to Excel Advanced. I thank the Apprenticeship Scheme for giving me these opportunities and hope this is just the start of my learning and development within DCC.

## Russell Hilton



I currently work as a Customer Service Advisor at My Devon, providing specialist support to a wide range of services, including Highways, Libraries, Waste Management and Social Services.

I don't feel that any of this would have been as easily attainable without the experience I first gained as an apprentice. This scheme has helped me improve a wide range of skills in organisation, teamwork, team-leading and communication, to name a few. There have been light-hearted moments along the way, and fantastic opportunities, such as the volunteer challenge and a meeting with Hungarian Councillors, that will live

long in the memory!

## Richard King



Location of Placement: Area East Highway Management

Qualifications: Business Admin Level 2 & 3, Customer Service Level 2 & 3

After completing my apprenticeship within Highway Management, I managed to secure a permanent position here in July 2010.

My duties at work include; dealing with insurance claims, road closures, vehicle crossings, dealing with customers enquiries/complaints and general admin duties.

I have been on numerous training courses; pothole and patching, winter service training, assertiveness and am a qualified first aider. The best part of my job is that everyday is different and there is a wide variety of tasks to complete.

The apprenticeship scheme was fantastic as it allowed me to gain new skills that I was able to use in my working environment. The best aspect of working for DCC is the amount of training opportunities available. My plan for the future is to undertake an Open Degree with the Open University, and then hopefully to become a primary school teacher or a job in education. There is nothing I can fault with the apprenticeship scheme and I hope it continues in the future.

### Teri Lammin



I started my apprenticeship in Devon Youth Service in 2008. In the summer of 2009, I gained a secondment to Recruitment Services and over the 2 year apprenticeship I completed an NVQ 2 and 3 in Business and Administration.

In 2010 I gained a permanent position within Recruitment Services as Recruitment Administrator. In this role I help organise recruitment processes, interview apprentices, interview casual workers and collate all the necessary information for their employment. My favourite part of my role is being able to get out of the office to different locations and assist with recruitment. As well as my NVQ I have completed my ECDL and various in-house courses.

I feel that the apprenticeship scheme is a perfect opportunity for people to enter the workplace in a structured and supervised programme, with the chance to gain valuable qualifications to prepare them for a permanent position with the authority. My favourite part of working for Devon County Council has been meeting and working with a wide variety of people.

### Charlotte Leigh



My apprenticeship took place at My Devon, Customer Service Centre. I completed NVQ Level 2 & 3 in Customer Service. I gained permanent employment at the Customer Service Centre as a Customer Service Adviser within 8 months of starting the apprenticeship. I answer calls to a broad range of services the County Council provide such as Highways, Libraries, Concessionary Travel, Waste & Recycling and many more.

I have attended a lot of training in each service area, and this is a continuing process. Most recently I attended training for the new Highways CSS system. Working at the CSC, I have learnt to like a job I didn't imagine myself doing and it has helped me gain confidence in a lot of areas. My plans for the future are to look out for other opportunities within DCC that interest me and carry on learning and developing by completing any training that becomes available.

### Ashley Nelis



I enrolled with Devon County Council on the apprenticeship scheme back in 2008 and I chose to be based within the Area South Highways Management Office, in Newton Abbot. As part of the scheme I completed an NVQ in both levels 2 and 3 in Business and Administration.

I started working within the Area South Highways Management Office in October 2008, and last February I gained permanent employment. I have a varied range of tasks and jobs that I undertake on a daily and weekly basis, including; Processing Insurance Claims, Parking Permits, Road Closure Applications, talking to customers both internal and external on the phone and responding to emails. I have taken part in many training courses some of which have been; Winter Maintenance Training, Safety Defect Training and Safety Inspections. All of which have been very rewarding in gaining knowledge and meeting new people. One of the things I have enjoyed most about my job role was going out on site with the Highway Superintendents during their safety inspections as it was a great insight in to learning about their job role and what their job role involves and how my own role fitted into that.

I found the apprenticeship scheme very rewarding and feel as though I have gained a lot more confidence in myself and the things I do and gained lots of valuable knowledge that will no doubt help me in the future. The thing I have enjoyed the most about working for DCC is the people I have worked with, as everybody has been very supportive and friendly and have helped me on my way to success. I have also enjoyed all the training courses there are on offer as there is so many to choose from and the ones I have attended have been a great help. In the future I hope to study a degree in Meteorology at Reading University and I'd like to see myself as a Meteorologist in several years time.

## Gordon Turner



My apprenticeship started with me working towards an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration whilst being placed in the Central Accounting Team within CYPS Finance. My duties within the team were inputting of invoices, orders, credit notes etc and also monitoring and reconciling the budgets each month. During my placement with this team I also did secondments in the Early Years Helpdesk and the PFI School Funding Team doing the duties that I was also doing in my placement.

Once my 4 month placement was finished I had already completed my NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration and undergoing the Level 1 ECDL qualification (European Driving Licence Course).

My next placement was the Finest Support Team which is the team that looks after the running and maintenance of the financial system that Devon County Council uses. My role within the team was to assist the Senior Systems Administrator in ensuring that financial systems are maintained and operated in accordance with financial standards and the business needs of the service directorates. Whilst working in the placement I worked towards gaining an NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration, an NVQ Level 3 in Customer Service and completing the Level 1 & 2 ECDL qualification.

Another part of the apprenticeship programme is to do a volunteering challenge and as a group we decided that we would build a sensory garden for Wynstream Primary School. This involved working together as a group to organise PR, photographer, logistics, materials, on the day coordinator, creative design etc which meant that we would all have a role to make sure the garden was completed in 1 day.

By the end of the first year of my apprenticeship I had completed my NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration, Level 1 & 2 for the ECDL and was near completion of my NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration. I had also managed to gain full time employment with the authority within the Finest Support Team as the Financial Systems Assistant so my role and responsibilities within the team would be increased. The second year of my apprenticeship was spent finishing of my NVQ Level 3 in Business Administration and then working to complete an NVQ Level 3 in Customer Service.

Now that I am permanently employed I have recently started undertaking an Accountancy qualification AAT and by completing this will enable me to start progressing to my career aim of being an Accountant.

## Liam Fryatt



Liam completed his apprenticeship placement with the ICT Desktop Team. During his time on the scheme he completed three apprenticeship qualifications; an Apprenticeship in IT, an Advanced Apprenticeship in Business and Administration and an Advanced Apprenticeship in Customer Service. He left Devon County Council in September 2010 to study Applied Psychology at the University of Plymouth.

## Bernard Collins



Bernie completed his apprenticeship placement with Recruitment Services and My Devon Customer Service Centre. He was successful in gaining two permanent positions within the Council, first with the Children and Young People's Services Business Support Team as a Team Support Clerk, and then with the Devon Pensions Service as a Pension Assistant. During his time on the scheme, Bernie completed an Apprenticeship in Business and Administration and an Advanced Apprenticeship in Business and Administration. Bernie left Devon County Council in August 2010 to study an access course in Music Technology and Audio Electronics at Lambeth College in London.