

The Apprenticeship Scheme



The Apprenticeship programme was introduced last October as one of DCC's entry to work initiatives to provide young people with the opportunity to develop skills, gain national vocational qualifications and secure permanent employment within the County Council

As an initiative it not only provides the Authority with an opportunity to take positive action in the recruitment and retention of young people but also enables our services to be developed from a young person's view point.

'Giving the best possible start in life to Devon's children and young people' is a key organisation priority. As an Authority we have a target of increasing the number of 16-18's in work, education or training. As a provider of public services it is also important that our workforce is representative of the communities we serve. Within DCC less than 3% of the current workforce is aged 16-24.

Providing entry routes into the organisation, particularly for young people, is



therefore a key part of our workforce plan. Research has shown that many young people are not attracted to working in local government. Those that are find it difficult to gain employment when competing against more experienced and qualified applicants.

As an Authority we want all young people to have the best possible start to

their working lives as an integral part of the move towards creating a society that is both inclusive and economically successful. Offering an Apprenticeship Programme that can capture the interest of young people and provide developmental opportunities leading to employment is crucial to achieving this goal.

Whilst much has already been achieved it is important that we continue to develop the programme to ensure it captures the interest and aspirations of young people, helping them to develop relevant skills and provide opportunities to contribute to the wider development of DCC.

Plans are now being developed to extend the programme to different occupational areas to include a wider cross section of young people.

Since its introduction a year ago :

- Our Apprentices have had opportunity to work in a variety of different areas including recruitment, finance, ICT, customer service, youth support, procurement, schools information service and directorate support teams gaining relevant experience and helping to develop services from a young person's point of view
- Managers involved from within directorates have all positively commented on the energy and enthusiasm of our Apprentices and the contributions both they and the programme are making to the organisation. In particular they have been instrumental in the design of the County's Young People's web pages. This has received positive endorsement from DCC's web team, Connexions and other partner agencies. As a result of this work a D.C.C young people 'look' is currently being developed which will be used for all means of communication in the future.
- Within a year of starting the programme all our Apprentices have developed relevant work skills, successfully completed the full level 2 awards and are making good progress towards achievement of the level 3 qualifications.
- 50% have secured employment with the Authority within the first year and are now working within Finance, and Customer Service Centre. Positions are now being secured for the remaining apprentices within the final year of their programme
- They have also been influential in helping to develop the scheme by presenting to Corporate Management Board, Full Council and at careers fairs, acting as ambassadors to the programme.
- To help attract more young people to the organisation our existing Apprentices also formed part of the assessment and interview panel to recruit this year's cohort. This not only provided a great development opportunity but enabled them to form a strong link and sense of responsibility for the new intake. They will now continue to support the new Apprentices, acting as their mentors and peer support
- Links to the programme have also been made via CYPs directorate to provide opportunities for 'looked after Children' and provide a progression route from work experience
- One Apprentice, Nathan Grimes, has been selected to represent Devon County Council as part of a team that will compete in at the "Young Local Authority of the year Challenge " in February 2008 at Bournemouth

Quotes from the Apprentices themselves:

"Before joining the scheme I thought DCC would be stuffy, bureaucratic and old. I had no idea what opportunities existed within the Council, or what services they provided. My views have certainly changed since becoming an Apprentice. I now have a better understanding of the valuable contribution Devon County

Council makes to local communities and I feel a part of this," **Gina McKee, Apprentice, Youth Service**

"I felt the recruitment and induction was very effective in the way it was carried out, as it was specifically aimed at young people and gave us chance to get a better understanding of Devon County Council as a whole. What's more, it gave us the chance to meet the other appointed apprentices and enabled us to mix and feel more comfortable around each other. Overall, DCC staff members have been very friendly and have made me feel very welcome. This helps give me motivation to want to achieve within the organisation" **Nathan Grimes, Apprentice Chief Execs Directorate**

"I have enjoyed every minute. The main thing I have liked is the friendliness of DCC staff in general, but mainly from the people in my office. Before joining the scheme I thought I might only be learning very basic tasks, but have been surprised at the variety of work and responsibilities I have been given. Another thing is the amount of people I have had a chance to meet, including the Chief Exec, Phil Norrey. It's been really good to talk to people in such a high status in the company. The amount of courses, sessions and opportunities that are available for training is also astonishing. More than I expected and great for my development. I have now gone onto gain permanent employment within finance at DCC and really enjoying my role. I will be starting my AAT course next year. To sum up I think the apprentice program is a great idea which is run very well. It has given youngsters like me a real good start and chance in life. Anyone who gets this opportunity I believe can consider themselves lucky! " **Leroy Venn, Finance Apprentice**

"I was honoured and privileged to have been selected to represent young people and my colleagues from the Devon County Council apprenticeship program for the equalities reference group. I feel that it is important to get a young persons perspective on issues that are going to effect them, as young people are not always directly represented in these types of meetings. The equality meeting is not just for Devon County Council directorates and offices; it involves and includes Devon charities and other large Devon organisations. This is just one example of the types of opportunities for people who take part in the Devon County Council apprenticeship program, and there are many more opportunities which we, as apprentices, can be involved in." **Ben Jones ,Apprentice at Devon Procurement Services**

"The Apprenticeship Scheme is a great way for young people to join the authority. I have found it to be the perfect opportunity for me to work in a professional environment and further my qualifications, whilst being paid. I have been here over a year now and have gained experience and learnt new skills within an office environment. I have completed my Level 2 apprenticeship in Business and Administration, and now working towards my level 3 qualification. There are also great prospects for me to further my qualifications and secure permanent employment". **Amelia Hurtley, Apprentice, Recruitment Services**

"I believe I have made an impact to this organisation at the Customer Service Centre. I am the first point of contact for many of the Devon Public and in my role I have helped solve many queries. I have also been involved in the web pages for young people team. I've now secured employment with Devon County Council and in the future I wish to progress and make the most of this fantastic opportunity" **Emma Willis, Apprentice , Customer Service Centre, Tiverton**