



NCH and plumbing apprentice both recognised at National Apprenticeship Awards

Nottingham City Homes (NCH) was last night named one of the top 100 apprenticeship employers in the country at this year's National Apprenticeship Awards.

The awards, which took place last night at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane in London, brings together top apprenticeship employers and apprentices from across the country, to celebrate excellence.

NCH, which has worked with hundreds of apprentices over the past ten years, was named last night as one of the Top 100 Apprentice Employers in the country, alongside big national names such as BT, Lloyds Banking Group and Centrica.

Apprentice plumber, Matthew Gustard, was also 'Highly Commended' in the Apprentice of the Year category.

Matt, 37, from Hucknall, said he wasn't sure if anyone would take him on when he was looking for an apprenticeship. Looking for a career change at more than double the age of most apprentices, was a daunting prospect.

"I started my apprenticeship with Nottingham City Homes (NCH) at the age of 35," said Matt. "If I am totally honest I never thought I had a chance of getting an apprenticeship due to my age. I didn't think a company would be willing to take a chance on me. However I am very happy to say I was wrong. At Nottingham City Homes my age was seen as a positive rather than a negative."

Despite a fantastic childhood, a good education and some success in his work, Mat felt he had become a bit lost. He added: "I'll admit it, I lost some focus and direction for a few years. I'm not proud of the person I was back then, but I'm using that life experience to help me move forward now, with the fantastic support of my managers and colleagues at NCH, not to mention my friends and family."

Matt now works at Nottingham City Homes, and is in his final year as an apprentice plumber: He added: "When I originally started I had no idea where my apprenticeship might lead me. But I can honestly say that becoming an apprentice is one of the best decisions I have ever made. I am now working for a community-based company, which gives me hands on support and guidance whenever I need it. I work alongside experienced trades people everyday on site, improving my knowledge and skills as well as learning new ones.

"I can't tell you how proud I am to have achieved such an accolade at a national level. A few years ago, I could never have imagined myself in this position. The apprenticeship programme has given me the chance to build a new career as well as a new life for myself and for this I will be eternally grateful to NCH."

Last year Matt led a team of Nottingham City Homes apprentices to the finals of The Brathay Apprentice Challenge. As part of this challenge he project managed the renovation of a historic building for a local charity, as well as helping local community organisation, Bulwell Forest Gardens, to repair their garden furniture and tidy up their gardens after they were hit by vandals.

Matt concluded: "When I look back over the past two years I have achieved a lot and for the first time in my life the future is an exciting prospect. I have now started my level 3 NVQ in Plumbing & Heating and I hope to continue further in higher education and eventually start a degree level

qualification. I am at the start of an exciting chapter in my life and I am full of enthusiasm for where my apprenticeship might lead me.”

Nick Murphy, Chief Executive of Nottingham City Homes, said: “Being named in the top 100 apprenticeship employers is a huge testament to the hard work carried out by our experienced colleagues, who take time to train and support our apprentices. It’s a team effort and everyone plays their part.

“We are a major employer in the city, and our ethos includes helping local people into work. Sometimes that means giving people an opportunity to overcome whatever has held them back. Our apprenticeship scheme offers a range of options for Nottingham people to step up and it’s fantastic to see it being recognised at a national level.

“We’re all delighted for Matt, he has come a long way in his own life, and from the day he started with us, he has been unquestionably committed and hardworking. He’s always looking for ways he can help others, develop his own skills and serve our residents in the best way he can. Matt lives and breathes our values, putting tenants and leaseholders at the heart of what he does. He is an inspiration and I am proud to work with him. I know he will continue to do well and inspire others across Nottingham and beyond.”

NCH will soon be launching a traineeships programme, which will help local people train to be ready for an apprenticeship. Apprenticeship opportunities are always advertised on the website: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk as and when they become available.

Ends

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