



Training offer key to attracting new staff to housing sector

Offering staff the chance to train for new qualifications will be key to attracting more people from other sectors to choose a career in housing, according to one of the first employees to complete the new trailblazers apprenticeship programme.

James Butterworth is a surveyor at Preston-based Community Gateway Association, and has just received a Distinction in his CIH Level 4 in Housing Practice qualification.

The course was delivered by Dutton Fisher Associates, and was amongst the first in the country based on new trailblazer apprenticeship standards.

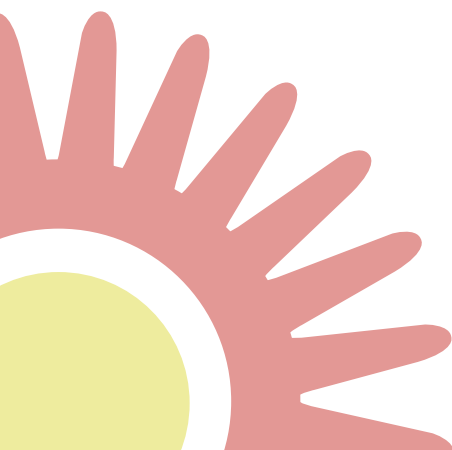
Dutton Fisher specialises in providing a unique approach to professional development and training, bridging the gap between education and the workplace to make sure that employees develop in both the classroom and the boardroom.

James, 30, had spent 10 years working outside the sector and running his own small business before making the switch to housing. He says the opportunity to broaden his horizons and learn new skills were a key influence in him joining the industry.

"There are not many natural routes into housing through academia," he said. "I am not sure what qualifications you'd take at university or college if it's a sector that you want to work in.

"That's why training like this is very important. It helps people feel part of the industry and understand the wider goals of what we are trying to do. For people like me who are coming in from outside the sector it gives you a sense of belonging."

After leaving school, James studied for his A Levels at Blackpool Sixth Form College, but decided that he did not want to go to university and instead opted for a trade. He began working as a joiner and received an NVQ Level 3 in carpentry and joinery, before eventually going on to work for himself, building up a successful small business.



After a decade in work James decided it was time to try something new and looked at options to re-train as a surveyor. He spent a day each month working for free at various housing associations to gain vital work experience before landing a role with Community Gateway in late 2015.

After an impressive start to his career, James was given the chance to be one of the first people to complete the new trailblazers apprenticeship delivered by Dutton Fisher.

"We talked about it with my manager, and as soon as they mentioned it I knew I wanted to do it," said James.

As part of the course James completed 15 days of classroom learning and around seven one-to-one training sessions, as well five coursework modules covering a wide range of subjects.

Dutton Fisher's blended learning approach means that a series of interactive training sessions are combined with high levels of training and support outside of the classroom, allowing people to balance their studies with working full-time.

The company offers a wide range of training and is accredited to deliver Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) programmes, Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) courses, and City & Guilds accredited programmes including Health and Social Care, Customer Care, and Business Administration Training.

"The classes with Dutton Fisher were run really well," he said "They challenged the group to think about our roles and the wider industry. It wasn't like being in a lecture where you just sit back and try to take it all in, it was a very engaging learning style.

"Now I've completed the course I feel like I can see the bigger picture, and can look at challenges from a strategic level.

"The qualification will be a springboard for my career. I know a lot more about where my strengths are and how I can improve. I'm hoping to take my Level 5 qualification sooner rather than later!"

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