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APPRENTICESHIP
AWARDS 2026

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WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT

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**DERBYSHIRE & NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
APPRENTICESHIP
AWARDS 2026**



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS & WINNERS!

Skills and apprenticeships are central to our vision for East Midlands Freeport.

They help local people access careers, give employers the talent they need to grow, and ensure the benefits of investment are felt within communities.

So it's been great to hear so many positive stories from the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Apprenticeship Awards about what people are achieving in our region.

East Midlands Freeport combines strategic sites, businesses and public sector partners to attract investment, create quality jobs, and unlock new opportunities.

As the UK's only inland freeport, we focus on three transformational development locations in the East Midlands.

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Talented apprentices, employers and training providers celebrated for their achievements

**DERBYSHIRE & NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
APPRENTICESHIP
AWARDS 2026**
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FREEPORT**

On Thursday, 1st October the Annual Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Apprenticeship Awards took place at The Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nottingham. Guests were welcomed with a drinks reception sponsored by The Crowne Plaza, followed by a three-course meal and, of course, the prestigious awards ceremony. We celebrated 14 award categories, recognising both outstanding apprentices and the employers and training providers who support them.

The awards serve as a platform to showcase the outstanding contributions of apprentices, employers, and training providers across Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire, recognising the vital role they play in developing future talent and supporting the region's economy. Celebrating the individuals who have embraced the opportunities apprenticeship programmes provide and flourished within their chosen careers. Through dedication, ambition and hard work, they are building strong foundations for the future while making a meaningful impact within their industries. As the innovators, leaders and skilled workforce of tomorrow, they continue to inspire those around them and showcase the true value of apprenticeships.

Apprentices prove that it is possible to rise to the top, driving change and innovation in their workplaces while making significant contributions to the local economy. This celebration marks the achievements of a generation that is breaking barriers, investing in themselves, and playing a vital role in regional growth. We thank everyone who supports these rising stars, and to those embracing apprenticeships, for their contributions benefit us all.

A special thank you to our esteemed panel of judges, comprising industry experts, diligently reviewed every nomination to determine this year's finalists and eventual winners. The judging process was meticulous, reflecting the high calibre of submissions received across the region. We extend our sincere thanks to our judging panel; they are;

Jean Mountain, Business Owner and Entrepreneur - The Dressing Room

Fardad Amirsaedi, Business & Enterprise Manager - Economic Growth & Regeneration - NCC

Martin Rigley OBE, Director - Gordian Consulting

Dr Peter Dewhurst - Chair, Business Peak District.



Phil Bramley, Group Editor at Iconic Media Group welcomed guests and said "It is a real pleasure to see so many people here tonight as we come together to celebrate the apprentices, employers, mentors and training providers who are helping to shape the future of our region. At a time when businesses face skills shortages and many young people are deciding what path to take after school or college, apprenticeships provide something incredibly valuable: a direct route into rewarding careers, practical experience and the chance to earn while learning.

There is growing political agreement about the importance of apprenticeships, but the reality is that opportunities are only created because businesses and organisations are willing to invest in people. Tonight is a celebration of those employers who are doing exactly that, and of the apprentices who have seized those opportunities and made the most of them. Of course, not everyone will leave with a trophy this evening. The standard of entries was exceptionally high, and simply being shortlisted is a significant achievement that you should all be proud of".

Phil also thanked the judges and sponsors for their support in making this event a success.

We then welcomed Tom Newman-Taylor, Chief Executive of our headline sponsor, to give an opening address. Tom offered a warm and lighthearted welcome to guests before turning to the evening's core purpose: celebrating the achievements of regional apprentices and skills partners. He began by thanking the event organisers for putting together the ceremony to honor local talent.

Providing context on the work of East Midlands Freeport, Tom explained that the organisation is a partnership—including the regional Mayor—working collectively to drive investment and create jobs across the East Midlands. He highlighted East Midlands

Airport as the Freeport's primary hub, noting its role as the UK's largest dedicated air freight airport, and offered a special shout-out to airport colleagues attending the event.

Tom explained that while much of the Freeport's day-to-day focus centers on developing large industrial sites, improving road and rail infrastructure, and attracting major businesses to establish bases in the region, the primary objective remains creating meaningful opportunities for future generations of East Midlandsers. Drawing from frequent discussions with local businesses and foreign companies looking to invest, he emphasized that finding individuals with the right skills and potential is crucial for employers.

Directly addressing the audience, Tom commended the apprentices, employers, and skills partners in attendance. He described apprentices as the true driver of the region's future, highlighting that their dedication is the reason businesses choose to establish and grow in the East Midlands. Looking ahead, he noted that many of the apprentices present would go on to run major companies or launch their own entrepreneurial ventures in the coming years.

Tom also shared insights from within the Freeport itself, mentioning that following several successful years of hosting summer interns, the organisation is now taking on its first formal apprentice. Reflecting on his interactions with young professionals, he expressed admiration for how proactive and thoughtful today's young people are regarding their career development and future goals.

In closing, Tom extended his congratulations to all the finalists and wished them success for the awards ceremony and their future careers. He concluded by hoping to see many of the finalists transition into the new employment opportunities being created across the Freeport's regional sites.

During the event we organised a raffle raising funds for our Charity Partner Aphasia Support. Aphasia Support is a charity dedicated to improving the lives of people with aphasia and their carers through tailored speech and language therapy and long-term support. Your generosity helps people regain independence, communicate with confidence, reconnect with loved ones and live life to the fullest.

We are pleased to share that the raffle donation raised over £2,200 insert amount. The event was hosted by Tom Watts, Freelance Presenter, Capital UK Network.

Tom is an award-winning radio presenter, DJ, live event host, content creator, and voiceover artist, best known for his long-standing career on Capital.

Keep up to date with the event visit the website www.dnapprenticeshipawards.co.uk





Intermediate Apprentice of the Year

WINNER
Daisy Madgwick,
Transport UK East Midlands Railway

Presented by James Major, Chief Executive, Aphasia Support
 Highly Commended: Devon Bottomley - Dalton Roofing Ltd

Daisy sought a career transition into the railway industry to earn while learning, gaining practical experience alongside formal qualifications. Navigating learning challenges as someone who is dyslexic, autistic, and has ADHD, she thrived through the balanced combination of theoretical instruction and visual, hands-on learning. After passing her theory examinations, Daisy progressed into the route learning and mentoring stages, where her practical capabilities and deep understanding of safety procedures truly excelled. Demonstrating outstanding commitment, she has consistently delivered exceptional customer service, taking proactive initiatives to assist passengers and ensure their comfort. Daisy actively shares her personal insights during neurodiversity training to support her peers, fostering an inclusive environment. Looking ahead, she aspires to become a mentor to guide future apprentices with similar neurodivergent needs. Her determination, growth mindset, and dedication make her an exemplary apprentice and a highly competent, safety-conscious team member.



Advanced Apprentice of the Year

WINNER
Ella Allen - Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust

Presented by Tom Watts (Host)
 Highly Commended: Reuben Pegg - Amey

Ella serves as a Business Administration Apprentice supporting senior leadership across People Services at Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust. Choosing an apprenticeship over traditional university study, she has combined academic excellence with extensive practical experience, earning distinctions across all assignments, projects, and exams. Ella coordinates complex strategic meetings, manages governance processes, and directly contributes to major Trust priorities, including leadership development reviews and administrative role assessments. A digital champion, she proactively trains colleagues on Microsoft Teams and Co-pilot, enhancing productivity and communication across multidisciplinary teams. Ella adaptively manages executive calendars, optimizes inbox management, and streamlines meeting structures to support senior directors effectively. Her initiative, organizational capabilities, and commitment to workforce inclusion have generated a tangible impact across the organization. Ella represents the standard of excellence in administrative apprenticeship and project administration.



Higher Apprentice of the Year

WINNER
Nathaniel David - Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Presented by Charlotte Shemilt, Media Sales Director, Local Eyes (Iconic Media Group)

Nathaniel has developed into a compassionate, dependable, and highly capable Nursing Associate at Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Driven by a deep commitment to patient care, Nathaniel approaches his clinical responsibilities with empathy, meticulous attention to detail, and sound clinical judgment. He excels at creating a reassuring environment for patients and families during stressful moments, consistently providing person-centered care. Clinically, Nathaniel conducts observations with precision, identifies subtle health changes promptly, and maintains rigorous standards of safety and infection control. Balancing demanding clinical shifts with academic study, he demonstrates exceptional resilience and reflective practice, using coursework to deepen his clinical knowledge and professional growth. Beyond direct patient care, Nathaniel actively supports team members, welcoming new colleagues and fostering a collaborative, positive workplace culture. His dedication, integrity, and clinical competence make him an indispensable asset to healthcare delivery.

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Nottingham Trent University



Degree Apprentice of the Year

Sponsored by Nottingham Trent University



WINNER
Jake Haywood - Influence Landscape Planning and Design Limited

Presented by David Drury, Degree Apprenticeship Manager, Nottingham Trent University

Highly Commended: Terri Wilson - Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust

Jake joined Influence in 2022 at age 18 and enrolled on the Level 7 Chartered Town Planner Degree Apprenticeship at Sheffield Hallam University. Blending academic rigor with commercial delivery, Jake rapidly assumed responsibility for technical project deliverables and client workflows. Notably, he produced key planning documentation for the award-winning Yorke Drive Regeneration project in Newark-on-Trent, delivering 281 new homes and revitalizing public open space. Beyond project work, Jake served as System Administrator for Influence's project management platform, Rapport 3, streamlining resourcing, time tracking, and financial monitoring across the firm. He mentors colleagues in CAD software, conducts careers presentations to hundreds of students, and represents Influence at industry forums as a brand ambassador. Pursuing full Chartered Planner status (MRTP) and upcoming Revit training, Jake exemplifies leadership, technical capability, and dedication to shaping the built environment for future generations.



Engineering & Manufacturing Apprentice of the Year **EAST MIDLANDS FREEPORT**

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our Headline Partner East Midlands Freeport

WINNER

Jimmie Warburton - Gecon

Presented by Tom Newman-Taylor, Chief Executive, East Midlands Freeport

The award was accepted on his behalf by Jimmie's mother (pictured)

Jimmie joined Gecon as a groundworker in 2022 before progressing to a Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeship at the University of Derby. Drawing on his practical site background, Jimmie independently executes setting-out duties using advanced robotic total stations across major commercial projects, including the £65 million Royal School Wolverhampton development. He manages site setting-out for foundations, drainage, and structural elements with high precision, ensuring strict quality assurance and accurate as-built records. Jimmie generates direct commercial value by performing cut-and-fill analysis to minimize off-site waste disposal and refining site QA documentation. Acting as a crucial bridge between engineering teams and site operatives, he frequently steps up to lead engineering operations in senior colleagues' absence. His strong work ethic, technical adaptability, and academic commitment demonstrate outstanding professional progression, establishing him as a rising leader within construction engineering.



Technology and Digital Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Ellie Blackman - Sarissa Precision

Presented by Martin Rigley OBE, Director, Gordian Consulting
Ellie achieved a Distinction in her Level 3 Multi-Channel Marketer apprenticeship with CT Skills and was promoted to Digital Marketing Executive at Sarissa Precision. Ellie transformed the company's digital marketing strategy from reactive posting to structured, data-driven campaigns. Leading the integrated marketing campaign for Gangs of Rome II across national gameshows, she redesigned the pre-order process, achieving a 250% increase in pre-orders, 18% higher stand sales, and a 75% rise in website traffic. By migrating email operations to Shopify Email and implementing customer segmentation and A/B testing, she drove a 149% increase in email revenue. Her content management expanded social media reach to 7.37 million impressions. Ellie presents monthly analytics to stakeholders, utilizes AI tools for copy optimization, and establishes repeatable marketing models for future product launches, exemplifying digital innovation and commercial impact.



Professional Services Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Daniel Harrison-Buckley, Nottingham Trent University

Presented by Fardad Amirsaeedi, Business & Enterprise Manager - Economic Growth & Regeneration, Nottinghamshire County Council

Daniel undertakes a Level 6 Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship while working as a Business Account Manager in Nottingham Trent University's Apprenticeship Team. Managing 40 employer accounts, Daniel supported over 150 apprenticeship starts during 2025/26, generating approximately £3.5 million in activity. He manages high-profile partnerships, including the East Midlands Ambulance Service Paramedic Degree Apprenticeship, and takes lead responsibility for commercial procurement and tender submissions. Daniel serves as the lead trainer for the University's Apprenticeship Management System (Aptem) and has been appointed to coordinate NTU's National Apprenticeship Week 2027 campaign. Recognizing his achievements, he received the NTU Outstanding Apprentice Award – Public Services 2026. Combining academic distinction with strategic commercial management, Daniel actively promotes apprenticeships to external stakeholders, embodying authentic leadership, resilience, and dedication to professional services development.



Health and Public Service Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Niamh Kerry - Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Presented by Tom Watts (Host)

Highly Commended: Julie Berry - Derbyshire Constabulary
Niamh is undertaking a Dietetic Degree Apprenticeship at Sheffield Hallam University while serving Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Overcoming academic challenges associated with dyslexia and ADHD, Niamh has developed structured strategies to excel academically and clinically. In mental health services, she delivers person-centered nutritional care, founding multidisciplinary Healthy Lifestyle Groups and conducting nutritional audits to elevate patient standards. Niamh established crucial trust with a severely malnourished patient experiencing withdrawal, enabling successful nutritional monitoring and care engagement. As a Course Representative for 26 apprentices and Trust Wellbeing Champion, she advocates for student support, leads staff training on screening tools, and promotes dietetic awareness. Her reflective practice, resilience, and clinical initiative have enhanced service delivery across the Trust, illustrating exceptional leadership, empathy, and professional dedication in public health.

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Mentor of the Year

WINNER

Kayleigh Foley - Nottingham College

Presented by Dr Peter Dewhurst, Chair, Business Peak District

Kayleigh serves as Residential Wellbeing Coordinator at Nottingham College, supporting over 600 residential apprentices annually who travel nationally for block-release training. Providing essential guidance across residential accommodation, Kayleigh conducts welfare checks, safeguarding reviews, and personalized inductions for young adults adjusting to independent living. She creates an inclusive community by introducing evening enrichment initiatives, including fitness sessions, sports viewing events, and social activities that reduce isolation. Kayleigh developed the comprehensive Residential Apprentice Handbook and Keeping Safe Handbook to enhance learner support structures. Beyond standard responsibilities, she offers dedicated one-to-one encouragement, addresses mental health concerns, and coordinates closely with tutors, employers, and safeguarding teams. Her proactive support, empathy, and commitment ensure apprentices build independence, confidence, and resilience necessary for academic success and personal well-being.



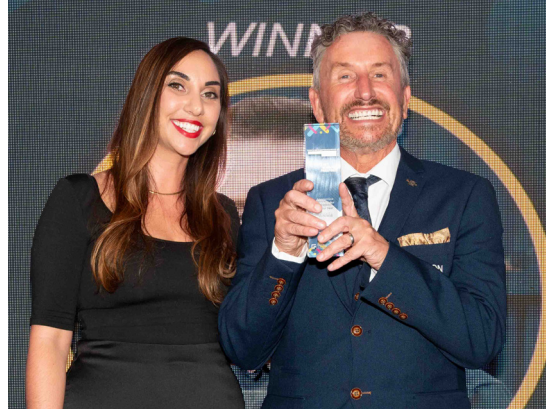
Construction Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Jacob Allen-Mee - Crawford & Co Surveyors

Presented by Phil Bramley, Group Editor, Iconic Media Group
Highly Commended: Ryan Horsley - Crawford & Co Surveyors

Jacob progressed from a Level 3 Surveying Technician apprenticeship to a degree apprenticeship at Crawford & Co Surveyors, building a career in building surveying. Gaining additional industry qualifications as an Energy Performance and Retrofit Assessment assessor, Jacob has completed nearly 3,000 property assessments, contributing vital data for client reporting. On a complex Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund project, he reconciled conflicting survey data and produced a detailed PAS 2035 compliant retrofit assessment addressing building fabric, ventilation, and moisture risk under tight commercial deadlines. Jacob communicates professionally with residents and clients, demonstrating sound judgment and attention to detail. Balancing workplace responsibilities with degree studies, he actively mentors newer team members and contributes to a collaborative culture. His ambition to qualify as a chartered building surveyor reflects sustained professional growth, technical excellence, and dedication to the energy-efficiency and construction sector.



Apprentice Ambassador of the Year

WINNER

Phil Dalton - Dalton Roofing Ltd

Presented by Katie Greenhalgh, Head of Green Growth and Inclusion, East Midlands Freeport

Philip, founder of Dalton Roofing, began his career as an apprentice roof slater in 1985 and now leads a 34-person business dedicated to workforce development. A passionate advocate for vocational pathways, Phil engages with schools, colleges, and over 750 social media followers to promote apprenticeships in construction. In 2026, he became an official employer partner of Chesterfield College's Construction Skills Hub and actively collaborates with the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. Phil invested heavily in a purpose-built Training Cabin at Dalton Roofing, giving apprentices dedicated weekly time for practical training, theory, and one-to-one mentoring. Under his leadership, Dalton apprentices have achieved national SkillBuild awards, distinctions, and permanent employment. Championing inclusivity, mature career-changers, and female representation in roofing, Phil exemplifies how business leadership and dedicated mentorship protect trade standards and inspire future generations.



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SME Employer of the Year

WINNER

LJM Solutions Ltd

Presented by Tom Watts (Host)

LJM Solutions Ltd, a family-owned electrical and renewable-energy contractor in Long Eaton, grew from three to 21 employees in three years by embedding apprenticeships into its core strategy. With nearly 25% of its workforce enrolled in Level 3 Domestic Electrician and Multi-Channel Marketer standards, LJM pledges to hire an additional apprentice for every £500,000 in public sector contracts secured. The company has scaled solar installations tenfold while maintaining direct employment, quality standards, and internal career progression. LJM actively recruits neurodiverse individuals, school leavers, and career changers, promoting staff into supervisory and managerial roles. Beyond internal development, LJM champions retrofit careers at school sessions, SEND events, and ambassador networks, demonstrating how SME investment in apprenticeships addresses national green skills shortages and drives local economic growth.



Large Employer of the Year

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Nottinghamshire County Council



WINNER

Vaillant Group UK

Presented by Cllr Richard Ward, Deputy Portfolio Holder: Economic Development & Asset Management, Nottinghamshire County Council

Vaillant Group UK has expanded its apprenticeship provision since 2019, introducing 32 new programmes spanning Level 3 to Level 7 across engineering, business administration, and low carbon technologies. Vaillant launched the inaugural cohort for the Low Carbon Heating Technician (LCHT) apprenticeship, accredited with the King's Standard. Apprentices receive comprehensive training on heat pumps, solar thermal systems, underfloor heating, and electrical controls, alongside work placements with installer partners. Vaillant apprentices actively promote low-carbon technology at national industry events, such as the Installer Show, and participate in cross-departmental product development. Vaillant supports graduating apprentices into permanent specialist roles within its service network or partner installer businesses. By expanding college partnerships nationally, Vaillant demonstrates outstanding commitment to upskilling the heating sector workforce and driving the transition toward sustainable energy solutions.



Training Provider of the Year



Sponsored by Vaillant Group



WINNER

CT Skills

Presented by Laura Thomas, Head of Training, Vaillant Group

CT Skills, an SME training provider headquartered in Beeston, supports 478 apprentices nationally across 18 standards, including 121 across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. Delivering online learning in early years, business, leadership, digital marketing, and housing, CT Skills provides free end-to-end recruitment services for regional employers. In 2025/26, CT Skills achieved a provisional regional Qualification Achievement Rate of 72.1% and a 90% first-time pass rate at End-Point Assessment, with 45.4% of learners attaining Distinctions. CT Skills developed its proprietary e-portfolio platform to monitor learner progress and enable early intervention. Launching its 100:100 Campaign in July 2026, CT Skills committed to creating 100 entry-level apprenticeship opportunities with local SMEs by 2027. CT Skills demonstrates high-quality occupational training, strong learner support, and national leadership in apprenticeship policy.



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