



# Vocational Pathways

## Cornerstone Employer Case Study

### Background

This is the second year we have run a virtual open doors event to raise awareness of vocational routes. We ran Open Doors 21 and wanted to build upon its success.

### Aims

- Provide an overview of apprenticeships and vocational pathways to raise awareness and dispel misconceptions.
- Raise awareness of local employers and their apprenticeship offers to help fill vacancies. Open Doors provides an opportunity for employers to raise awareness of their organisation with young people. Post event, all live apprenticeship vacancies with participating organisations were forwarded to students.
- Provide an impactful way for schools to easily engage with National Apprenticeship Week.



**I remember how useful careers advice and work experience was for me, so it was great to help out.**

Amy Sharp, Architectural Assistant completing Architect Level 7 Apprenticeship with Thakeham Homes

### Actions

We approached our Cornerstone Employers and wider employer network for enthusiastic current/recent apprentices willing to take part (from any level). Our Cornerstone Employers group stepped up to this challenge and provided the majority of our apprentice volunteers.

We also approached all schools in our Careers Hub, targeting Years 10, 11 and sixth form (but pupils as young as Year 7 took part). Around half of the schools we approached took part.

We then matched schools and employers together based on preferred dates and times. As the content for each talk was the same, i.e. non sector specific, we avoided schools potentially being too selective about where the Apprentice was employed.

We shared a brief with the Apprentices and they joined a preparatory webinar to discuss. We asked them to provide an overview of their pathway from secondary school to now; the recruitment process for their apprenticeship; some insights into the world of work; and the advantages/disadvantages of apprenticeships compared to other pathways.

Schools were asked to prepare students in advance – explaining what apprenticeships are, planning questions, and providing a brief about the employer.

Each event was a 20-30 minute virtual talk followed by Q&A.



**It's really important to us that we are able to reach young people considering apprenticeships in our area, the Open Doors Programme was a fantastic way to work collaboratively with other Cornerstone Employers to support understanding of the apprenticeship pathway for local students. It was also a brilliant opportunity for our apprentices to develop their skills as they progress in their early careers – I know that sharing their experiences and inspiring the next generation was rewarding for them.**

Sarah Crush, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Thakeham and Chair of Coast to Capital Cornerstone Employers Group.



# Amplifying Technical Vocational Routes

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## Outcomes

### Early Wins:

- 10 corporate employers participated, providing 20 Apprentices for Open Doors 22
- 12 schools within the Careers Hub participated in 14 individual Apprentice talks with over 5000 students in total.
- A sample of 96 students surveyed - 79% enjoyed the event, 65% agreed or strongly agreed that Open Doors had helped them consider their next steps after school and 64% agreed or strongly agreed that would like to know more about apprenticeships.
- Excellent feedback from participating Apprentice volunteers who were sent a £10 Amazon voucher as thanks.

### Emerging:

- We are hoping to see increased take-up of technical/ apprenticeships/ vocational options.
- Increasing parental knowledge and engagement.

## Learnings

Ensure that schools understand the talks are generic, and not sector specific.

Ensure that schools understand that they are responsible for preparing students in advance of the talk. Students should have pre-knowledge of what an apprenticeship is, the purpose of the talk, and information about the apprentice's organisation so that they can plan questions in advance.

Recommend that schools follow up the talk with a classroom discussion and share the live apprenticeship vacancies and where to go for more information and support.

Some schools will request more than one apprentice talk. We accommodated this wherever possible.

### Relates to Careers Hub Coordinated Actions



Amplifying technical and vocational routes



Effective transitions



Employers build long term sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships with schools and colleges

### Relates to Gatsby Benchmarks

2

Learning from career and labour market information.

5

Encounters with employers and employees.

### How did the work align with the Cornerstone Employer role?



Helped to promote the hubs and the role of careers and education



Helped to embed careers education in the Cornerstone Employers' organisations



Helped to achieve better outcomes for young people

## Next Steps

As we move to full coverage of the Careers Hub from Sept 22, we would like to offer Open Doors to all schools in the network next year during National Apprenticeship Week 2023. We will need to engage more businesses from across the region in the initiative. We will consider how this initiative can be adapted for special schools and APCs.