



NORTH YORKSHIRE & APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS 2026



Harrogate Advertiser



WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Apprentices, Employers and Providers Recognised for Remarkable Achievements



On Thursday, 11th June we held the Annual North Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards, held at DoubleTree Majestic Hotel, Harrogate. Guests were welcomed with a drinks reception kindly sponsored by the Hotel, 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 North Yorkshire, 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;

Adrian O'Neill, Work and Skill Interchange co-ordinator - York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority (YNYCA)

Thomas Lupton, Quality & Compliance Director - Econ Engineering

Annette Hobson, Regional Membership Manager - Make UK

Aida Yousefjadi, Apprenticeship Assessor & Compliance Coach - Leeds College of Building

Fiona Gamwell, Business Support Manager | Apprentice Ambassador - Hudson Contract

Greg Wright, Deputy Business Editor of The Yorkshire Post said "Good evening and welcome to the North Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards!

Tonight we celebrate the dynamic and enterprising employers and individuals who are driving economic growth in Yorkshire.

Apprenticeships bridge the massive gap between classroom learning and real-world experience. They change lives by offering a unique formula: you earn while you learn. Instead of graduating with thousands of pounds of student debt, apprentices enter the workforce earning a wage from day one, while simultaneously gaining respected qualifications.

For businesses, apprenticeships are not just a nice gesture; they are an economic necessity. They allow

industries to build a highly skilled workforce from the ground up, filling vital skills gaps and bringing fresh, innovative perspectives into the workplace.

Apprenticeships prove that practical skills are just as valuable as academic ones. They build confidence, drive economic growth, and offer everyone—regardless of their background—a direct, accessible ladder to professional success.

Let us continue to invest in, celebrate, and elevate apprenticeships. They are not a secondary choice; they are a first-class ticket to a successful career".

During the event we organised a raffle raising funds for our Charity Partner The Principle Trust Children's Charity who provide free respite breaks for children across Yorkshire facing adverse childhood experiences like; mental health challenges, illness, disability, trauma, or hardship. Through its eight respite homes, they offer time to rest, reconnect, and create lasting memories, improving wellbeing and bringing joy to families who need support most.

We are pleased to share that the raffle donation equaled £1,712

The event was hosted by Rich Williams, an award-winning radio presenter and live event host, currently part of the Breakfast Show team on the Absolute Radio network. A former Arqiva Commercial Radio Presenter of the Year, he has hosted major international sporting events including FIFA World Cups, UEFA

Women's EUROs and Champions League Finals. Rich also produces podcasts and is an award-winning children's author.

Keep up to date with the event visit the website

<https://www.nyapprenticeshipawards.co.uk/>





Intermediate Apprentice of the Year

Sponsored by Derwent Training

WINNER

**Tom McBain,
Askham Bryan College**



Presented by Claire Gavaghan, Chief Executive Officer

Highly Commended awarded to both Blake Arliss, Smith & Rhodes Butchers and Bakers and Jake Fisher, WJ Richardson

Tom McBain's apprenticeship journey exemplifies resilience, adaptability, and excellence. After a successful career in sports science, Tom embraced a new path as a Level 2 Arborist apprentice at Askham Bryan College in 2024, following redundancy. Rather than seeing change as a setback, he tackled his new role with determination and a passion for learning. Balancing a young family, full-time work formerly at Amey-Sheffield Council, and academic commitments, Tom excelled both practically and academically—passing all his arborist certificates on the first attempt and consistently producing outstanding coursework. His analytical skills, drawn from his academic background, and his positive, mature attitude set him apart. Tom is recognised as a role model by peers and colleagues, supporting others and promoting lifelong learning. His journey demonstrates the value of apprenticeships for career changers, and his achievements make him a deserving winner for the North Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards 2026.



Advanced Apprentice of the Year

Sponsored by Yorkshire Water

WINNER

**Isaac Clark,
eProductivity Software UK Ltd**



Presented by Yorkshire Waters Head of Water Quality & Production, Andy Shaw

Highly Commended awarded to Rocco Lilley, William Hare

Isaac's apprenticeship with eProductivity Software UK Ltd, delivered in partnership with Derwent Training, exemplifies the transformative power of vocational education. Since starting his Level 3 Mechatronics Maintenance Technician apprenticeship in 2023, Isaac has combined technical mastery with an enterprising spirit and commitment to personal development. He rapidly progressed from learning core mechanical skills in the workshop to undertaking complex international assignments, including critical installations and maintenance across Europe and Latin America. Isaac's initiative was notably demonstrated during a high-pressure incident in Serbia, where he single-handedly diagnosed and fixed a system failure, earning him the company's "ePraise" award. His achievements have also been recognized regionally with the prestigious Merchant Adventurers Award for innovation and leadership. Beyond technical excellence, Isaac has pursued industry-leading certifications in safety and mental health. With ambitions for higher qualifications and future leadership, Isaac is setting new standards for apprentices in North Yorkshire's engineering sector.



Higher Apprentice of the Year

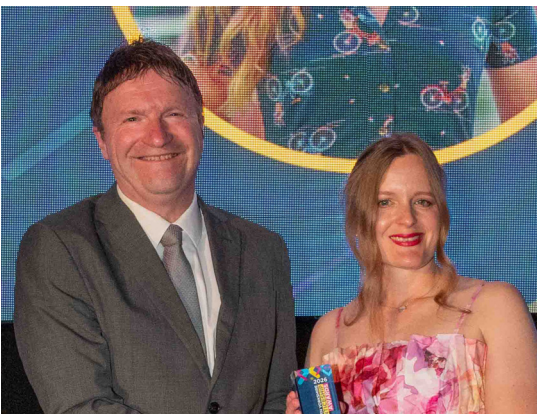
WINNER

**Thomas 'Patrick' Steel, North Baltic
Apprenticeships**

Presented by Mark Harsley, Iconic Events, Business Development Manager

Highly Commended awarded to Luka Jobson, NYHighways

Patrick is a remarkable young engineer whose journey through North's apprenticeship program stands out for both achievement and impact. Starting with a distinction in his Level 3 Network Cable Installer apprenticeship, Patrick chose hands-on experience as the gateway to the ICT industry. Joining North as an apprentice Network Engineer in 2023, he quickly adapted to the complex demands of the City of York Council's extensive network. Within six months, Patrick independently delivered a high-profile network installation for York Central and played a pivotal role in a large-scale telephony migration, solving problems proactively and supporting colleagues. His drive for innovation saw him automate key network management tasks and build custom tools adopted by the team. Beyond technical skills, Patrick champions apprentice representation and wellbeing initiatives. Recently passing his apprenticeship with distinction and perfect marks, Patrick's work ethic, maturity, and positive influence have earned him a permanent position and the reputation of being a true 'force of nature.'



Degree Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

LOUISE GREEN, AQUA CONSULTANTS

Presented by Greg Wright,
Yorkshire Post Deputy Business Editor

Louise's apprenticeship has been a transformative journey, taking her from office management into a pivotal project management role at Aqua Consultants. Encouraged by senior leaders to become the organisation's first degree apprentice, Louise has pioneered new standards in capability and innovation. Since starting her studies at York St John University, she has excelled academically and professionally, achieving First Class and 2:1 grades while leading business-critical bids and tenders worth millions. Louise's work has directly contributed to Aqua's commercial success, improved internal processes, and introduced digital innovations, such as implementing AI tools and CostOS estimating software. Beyond her core role, she has driven sustainability initiatives like "Trail Tales" and championed improvements in internal communications. Louise's commitment, leadership and ability to translate learning into measurable impact have set her apart as a role model both within Aqua and the wider sector, exemplifying the value of apprenticeships in developing future leaders.



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**Engineering / Manufacturing
Apprentice of the Year**

Sponsored by Made Smarter



WINNER

Sam Welch, York College and University Centre

Presented by Mike Pennington, Business Relationship Manager, York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

Highly Commended awarded to Owen Parsons, GS Hydro

Sam Level 3 Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technician apprenticeship with Siemens Healthineers has been an outstanding journey of growth and technical achievement. Opting for an apprenticeship to gain hands-on experience in healthcare technology, Sam quickly distinguished himself through initiative, maturity, and a commitment to excellence. He became one of the youngest apprentices to complete full product training on four systems, often exceeding expectations in his day-to-day work on installations, maintenance, and repairs of critical diagnostic equipment. Sam's supervisors and colleagues praise his reliability, technical skills, and problem-solving abilities. He's resolved complex faults, contributed to major laboratory projects, and often supports high-profile equipment go-lives. Beyond technical proficiency, Sam is involved in team development, volunteers for extra training, and promotes STEM careers through outreach. His ambition to mentor future apprentices and become a specialist field engineer demonstrates his dedication to both personal progress and the wider healthcare community.



**Construction Apprentice of the Year
WINNER**

Joe Robson, NYHighways

Presented by Host Rich Williams

Joe's apprenticeship journey with NYHighways showcases the real value of hands-on learning in the highways sector. Coming from a family connected to highways and council services, Joe chose an apprenticeship to combine earning with practical skill development. Over two years as an Apprentice Highways Operative in Area 7, he has become a reliable and respected team member, known for his strong work ethic and commitment to safety and quality. Joe's willingness to go beyond expectations has directly improved project outcomes, notably on the Springfield Crescent scheme, where his attention to detail contributed to high-quality results praised by residents. His ability to learn quickly from mentors, adapt across a range of tasks, and communicate effectively with the public has made him a valued asset to the organisation. Joe's growth, professionalism, and positive attitude set an example for future apprentices and underline his potential for a lasting career in highways.



Health and Public Service Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Wendy Whiston, North Yorkshire Council

Presented by The Principle Trust Children's Charity, Linda Yates, Corporate Development Manager

Wendy's journey through North Yorkshire Council's Level 4 Adult Care/Leadership Apprenticeship has been transformative for both her and her organisation. Chosen through the "Manager of the Future" programme, Wendy overcame initial doubts about returning to formal learning thanks to tailored support. The apprenticeship, matched to Deputy Manager duties, enabled her to confidently take on higher responsibilities and strengthen the service's governance and quality assurance. Wendy made a significant impact by leading documentation and mentoring for Advanced Autism Accreditation and supporting a successful CQC inspection with her data analysis and governance skills. The experience developed her analytical, communication, and leadership abilities, helping colleagues and enhancing team culture. Wendy's progress demonstrates resilience and professionalism, delivering results beyond her Team Leader role and preparing her for a future as a Registered Manager. Her apprenticeship highlights the value of investing in leadership development and effective succession planning within adult care services.



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YorkshireWater



Technology and Digital Apprentice of the Year

Sponsored by York St John University



WINNER

**Kieran Graham,
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority**

Presented by Thomas Burton,
Head of Apprenticeship Delivery

Kieran's apprenticeship has set a new standard for early-career excellence. As the Authority's first apprentice, Kieran has played a pivotal role in developing and implementing critical data systems that support millions of pounds in public funding for adult skills programmes. His technical capabilities—ranging from advanced Excel modelling and coding to sophisticated Power BI dashboards—have delivered measurable benefits, including improved data integrity, efficiency, and compliance across the region. Kieran's innovative approach replaced manual processes with automated solutions, supporting thousands of learners and enhancing operational effectiveness. Beyond his technical achievements, Kieran is recognised for his professionalism, commitment to continuous improvement, and ability to translate complex data into actionable insights for colleagues and partners. As a role model, he actively promotes apprenticeships, supporting peer learning and driving organisational change. Kieran exemplifies the impact and potential of apprenticeships in shaping future data professionals.



Professional Services Apprentice of the Year

WINNER

Donna Jones, Network Rail

Presented by Host Rich Williams

Donna's apprenticeship at Network Rail has been a transformative journey, building on her 7–8 years of project management experience. As a Lead Portfolio Manager in the Wales and Western Region, Donna chose the apprenticeship to formalise her skills and deepen her understanding of project management best practices while delivering safety-critical rail projects. Her role involves leading complex signalling renewals and level crossing safety interventions, directly contributing to passenger and public safety. Donna's apprenticeship has enabled her to apply new knowledge in real time, resulting in measurable improvements in delivery efficiency, innovation, and team performance. Key achievements include winning 'Innovation of the Year' at the National Rail Awards, delivering safety milestones, and becoming a subject matter expert in Overlay Miniature Stop Light systems. Donna's dedication, leadership, and collaborative approach have been widely recognised, positioning her as a role model and a future-focused leader committed to Network Rail's strategic objectives and continuous improvement.



Apprentice Ambassador WINNER

Thomas Burton, York St John University

Presented by Fiona Gamwell, Business Support Manager | Apprenticeship Ambassador

Thomas's journey as an ambassador for apprenticeships is a testament to his unwavering commitment to vocational education and skills development. Starting as an NVQ student in 1999, Thomas has experienced apprenticeships as a learner, tutor, degree apprentice, and leader. His advocacy is deeply rooted in personal experience, allowing him to connect meaningfully with apprentices and employers alike. Over the past year, Thomas has championed apprenticeships through school visits, careers fairs, webinars, and employer events, making apprenticeship pathways visible and accessible for young people and SMEs. His leadership at York St John University and roles with the Yorkshire and Humber Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and Yorkshire Learning Providers have positioned him at the heart of regional collaboration and innovation. Recognised with the YHAAN "Biggest Impact to the Network" Award, Thomas continues to drive change by mentoring apprentices, supporting employers, and raising the profile of vocational routes across the community.

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**Mentor of the Year
WINNER**

Amy Morton, North Yorkshire Council

Presented by Aida Yousefjadi, Apprenticeship Assessor and Compliance Coach, Leeds College of Building

Amy Morton's mentorship has set a benchmark for inclusive and transformational support in apprenticeship development. As an Assessor Coach, Amy has empowered apprentices like Wendy Whiston, who faced setbacks and a learning break, to re-engage and excel beyond expectations. Amy's approach is rooted in empathy, trust, and strengths-based development, offering tailored, structured mentoring that aligns learning with real-world responsibilities. Notably, Amy responded proactively to Wendy's ADHD diagnosis, adapting strategies to foster independence and confidence while maintaining high standards. Her commitment extends beyond academic achievement; she nurtures leadership, resilience, and reflective practice, enabling apprentices to make meaningful workplace contributions. Wendy's progression from struggling learner to respected emerging leader, recognised in apprenticeship awards, underscores the profound impact of Amy's mentorship. Amy's dedication, adaptability, and collaborative spirit exemplify best practice, making her a standout figure in the field and a deserving Mentor of the Year nominee.



**SME Employer of the Year
WINNER**

Follifoot Riding Centre

Presented by Annette Hobson, Regional Membership Manager, Make UK

Follifoot Park Riding Centre stands out as a beacon for apprenticeship excellence in the SME sector. As a small, family-run equine business, Follifoot has developed a forward-thinking apprenticeship programme that has supported six apprentices into skilled, confident roles within the equine industry. Apprenticeships are central to the centre's workforce strategy, providing structured development, hands-on experience, and a clear pathway from entry-level to senior positions. Follifoot's commitment extends beyond technical training, embedding pastoral support, welfare, and community impact into its culture. Apprentices are actively involved in all aspects of the business, including supporting disabled riders, working with young horses, and participating in the Changing Lives Through Horses programme. Many apprentices remain with the centre after qualifying, evidence of a nurturing environment and strong mentoring. Investments in facilities and a focus on inclusive, high-quality coaching ensure Follifoot continues to shape the next generation of equine professionals.



**Large Employer of the Year
WINNER**

**Apprenticeship Programme
North Yorkshire Council**

Presented by Host Rich Williams

North Yorkshire Council stands out as one of the region's largest and most committed employers of apprentices, offering a diverse range of opportunities across its many departments and services. With a forward-thinking approach to workforce development, the council actively invests in the future by providing structured apprenticeship programmes that cater to both school leavers and those seeking to upskill or retrain. Apprentices benefit from hands-on experience, expert mentorship, and nationally recognised qualifications while earning a wage, ensuring they are well-prepared for long-term careers within the public sector. The council's dedication to nurturing local talent not only addresses skills gaps but also strengthens communities by retaining skilled individuals in the area. North Yorkshire Council's apprenticeship schemes demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusivity, personal development, and career progression, making it a leading choice for those looking to embark on rewarding careers and contribute positively to public service across North Yorkshire.



**Training Provider / Programme
of the Year**

WINNER

**Qualification Delivery Team
North Yorkshire Council**

Presented by Greg Wright, Yorkshire Post Deputy Business Editor

North Yorkshire Council (NYC) stands as a sector leader in workforce development, delivering high-impact apprenticeship programmes across England's largest county. Through their Learning & Development Service, NYC supports over 300 apprentices at any time, focusing on Adult Health & Social Care (AH&SC) and broader service areas. At the heart of this success is the Qualification Delivery Team (QDT), which provides specialist, inclusive, and accessible training designed to meet operational needs and empower progression from entry-level roles to leadership. Apprentices benefit from secure employment, tailored coaching, and clear career pathways, resulting in outstanding outcomes: a 100% EPA pass rate, high retention, and leadership advancement. The QDT's close collaboration with employers and regional partners ensures training remains relevant and responsive, evidenced by an Outstanding Ofsted judgement and national awards. NYC's approach not only strengthens local services but sets a benchmark for excellence in public sector learning and development.



