

CASE STUDY: Building Futures

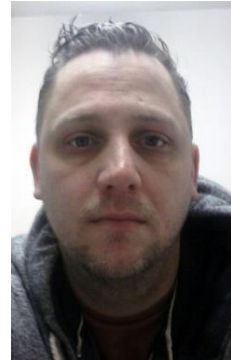
Gareth Andrews, Stevenage



BACKGROUND

I had worked for a welding company for about five years and thought I'd be there for ages, but when the recession hit, the work dried up and I was made redundant. There wasn't a lot of work in my field so I had to bite the bullet and sign onto the dole.

After about a year I heard about the Building Futures course, which was delivered by Ixion Holdings on behalf of Wates Group. It was a two-week course where we learned about things like plumbing, tiling and carpentry, and went out to look at building sites. We also had a community day where we did up a play area in a park in Stevenage which was in the local newspapers.



Since the course, I have become self-employed and am currently working full time for Wates which is refurbishing the kitchens and bathrooms at Fred Millard Court sheltered housing in Stevenage. I'm very glad I did the course. I learned a lot and it helped me get acquainted with the right type of people to get my current job.

"I would recommend the apprenticeship to anyone."

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

I'm always rushed off my feet in the morning, because I have to get the kitchens and bathrooms ready to be refurbished. I have to protect everything and cover the fire alarms to make sure they don't go off when the work is being done. I also have to move everything out of the kitchens and bathrooms before the construction team gets to work.

Because the people in the home are elderly, you have to make sure they're ok during the upheaval. They all know me now - I'm always getting pots of jam and cups of tea, and one lady gives me a different chocolate biscuit every day! It's nice to be able to give them a bit of company while we're working on the home.

"(The residents) all know me now – I'm always getting pots of jam and cups of tea"

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Because I have enjoyed working at the home so much, I am now thinking about changing jobs and becoming a Resident Liaison Officer. It's not something I would have thought about doing before, but working at Fred Millard Court has made me realise that it's something I'd really like to do.