

Handy Skills ensure school leavers are first in line for apprenticeships

Tuesday 10 November, 2015

Two 16 year old students from Merseyside (St Michaels School in Crosby) have gone on to secure full-time trade apprenticeships, thanks to One Vision Housing's (OVH) 'Handy Skills Programme'.

The housing association created the programme to help raise aspirations of 15-16 year olds about to leave full time education, particularly those students struggling to engage academically. It gives students a taster of what it's like to work in the Facilities Management and Construction Industry, with classroom sessions led by tradesmen providing practical introductory workshops in plumbing, joinery, electrics and basic DIY skills such as tiling.

Connor Dyer and Charlie Symes were identified as the most inspiring students of the 12 who attended Handy Skills sessions at St Michaels School (in January 2015). On completion of the two-day programme they were both offered work experience opportunities with Sovini Property Services (SPS), and a few weeks later started working one day per week (during term time) to gain experience across a multitude of trades.

Marie Morgan, OVH Youth Engagement Officer, said: "The Handy Skills Programmes have been a great success. It's inspiring to see young people engaging and taking a "Hands On Approach" towards a new and exciting career. To watch Connor and Charlie grow in confidence over the months shows how empowering this project is, giving young people a chance to succeed and thrive"

During the work experience placement, the students were also given advice and support to help them write their CV and complete job applications, which they could now fill with the wealth of knowledge and practical experiences gained during their placement.

Thanks to their career head start, by the time they finished school this summer, both Connor and Charlie were shaped into exceptional candidates for the next intake of apprentices at Sovini Property Services; a local facilities management company with over 250 employees.

Charlie said: "After the Handy Skills lessons I knew exactly what I wanted to do after leaving school. The summer holidays have only just finished and already I have a full time job, and have started a career that I know I'll love."

Connor said: "I was so happy when One Vision Housing picked me for the work experience placement. I looked forward to working with Sovini Property Services it every week and now I get to work there fulltime."

To deliver the Handy Skills programme, OVH worked closely with SPS; who is their primary facilities management contractor, which delivers the 24-hour maintenance contract for OVH's 13,000 homes in the North West, as well as other housing associations in the region.

Connor's parents, Gary and Jane Dyer, said: "We cannot thank One Vision Housing enough for the fantastic opportunity they gave our son. We've watched him change from quite shy boy into a confident young man since he started at Sovini. He looks forward to work each day and comes home proudly telling us what he's achieved."

OVH is committed to working with young people throughout Sefton and providing exciting programmes for schools is a key part of its Youth Engagement Strategy.

For more information about OVH initiatives visit www.ovh.org.uk or call 0300 365 1111.

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