



The Derry Building Services apprentice and long service awards 2025. Photo: Supplied

1,300 students at careers expo event

A major careers event aimed at helping young people plan their futures attracted more than 1,300 students from across the area.

The Future First Careers Expo, organised by Newark and Sherwood District Council in partnership with the Lincoln College Group, welcomed Year 11 to 13 students from ten schools.

Now in its eighth year, the event continues to grow, offering teenagers the chance to explore a wide range of education, training and career options.

More than 50 exhibitors filled The Lady Eastwood Centre, at Newark Showground, including local employers, national companies, universities, colleges and training providers.

Apprenticeships, vocational courses and emerging industries were all represented, giving students the opportunity to ask questions, collect information and discover options they may not have previously considered.

Claire Penny, cabinet member for sustainable economic development at Newark and Sherwood District Council, said: "The Future First Careers Expo continues to be one of the most impactful events in our calendar."

"It brings together education and industry in a way that empowers young people in our area to make more informed decisions about the next steps in their careers and futures."

"The enthusiasm and curiosity we saw from students this year was inspiring."

Exhibitors included well-known national businesses such as Barclays, Currys and Boots, alongside representatives from the British Armed Forces and Police Service.

Education and training providers such as Newark College, Nottingham Trent University and West Notts College were also on hand to advise students on post-16 and post-18 routes.

John Trevatt, careers leader at Magnus Church of England Academy, said the event had offered students vital insight into the opportunities available beyond school.

He added: "They engaged with employers, explored diverse career pathways from STEM to Creative Arts, and gained invaluable insights into the skills demanded by the modern workforce."

"It was a privilege to witness their eyes open to the vast opportunities ahead."

The Expo was first launched in 2017 as part of wider efforts to improve social mobility and ensure all young people in the district have access to clear, achievable career pathways.

Staff and apprentices are honoured at ceremony

By Eloise Gilmore
e.gilmore@iliffepublishing.co.uk

The efforts of a construction firm's employees and apprentices have been celebrated at an annual awards ceremony.

Each year, Newark-based Derry Building Services hosts the ceremony to recognise the hard work of electrical, mechanical, and technical engineering apprentices and the business' longest serving employees.

This year marking its 20th anniversary, the awards were held at Deincourt Hotel, just over the road from the head office at The Old Hospital, London Road.

Eight ten-year service and 11 25-year service awards were presented, alongside nine apprentice awards. The event also featured a talk from Jack Kirkland, chairman of parent company Bowmer and Kirkland.

Director Brian Hughes, awards organiser, said: "It's important we have the training awards because they recognise the talent coming in. The apprentices all work hard and have to study in their own time, and they are the future of the industry. It is important to make them feel

empowered and part of the business.

"We also want to reward loyalty. The construction industry has always had a resource problem — so when staff commit ten or 25 years to us, that's a significant part of their working life."

"We're still very much a family-based business. Loyalty you can't buy and it's only right that we reward it."

Among those recognised at the event was Declan Carnelley, who was named Mechanical Apprentice of the Year.

Declan, an apprentice mechanical part fitter for heating and ventilation, said: "My apprenticeship has been exciting. I've enjoyed it. It was something I'd wanted to do for a while before I joined, it was just about taking the leap."

"I don't think anything sets me apart, I just put 100% in and try my hand at everything."

He is now in his fourth year of his apprenticeship which sees him attend Leeds College of Building while receiving on-the-job training from Derry Building Services to develop industry skills.

Ethan Timmins was the stage four Electrical Appren-

tice Winner for 2025, and is now a qualified electrician after completing his apprenticeship.

He has been with Derry Building Services for just over four years, during which time he has won the award twice.

"It's nice to be recognised," Ethan said.

"People also notice on site, so your work isn't without recognition."

"It's been good [at Derry Building Services], any time I've needed help I've asked for it, found the right person and got what I needed."

Quantity surveying apprentice Michelle Ncube was the recipient of the Professional Conduct Award for 2025.

Now halfway through her five-year course, Michelle said her role with Derry Building Services had allowed her to develop in confidence and her ability to speak with people in a variety of environments.

"The award recognises how I carry myself, and how people see me day to day — both in the office and out on sites," she said.

"It feels like everything I've done so far has been recognised. As an apprentice you do have to put in a lot of effort,

and it also pushes me to want to continue that."

Director Gregg Matthews was among those who received a long service award, marking 25 years with Derry Building Services.

He first joined as an electrician in 1993 and worked for the company for five years at that time, before rejoining in 2000.

His career progression within the company resulted in him taking on the director role in 2016.

"We pride ourselves on our staff retention, making it a nice place to work and offering career progression," Gregg said.

"40% of our staff have done ten years, and 15% have done 25 years — I'm proud to be one of these and my journey shows how we allow progression through the company."

Apprentice award winners:

Mechanical Apprentice of the Year, Declan Carnelley; Mechanical Achievement Award, Ricky Allsop; Highly Commended Award, Daniel Foster.

Stage One Electrical Apprentice of the Year, Oliver Welch; Stage Two Electrical Apprentice of the Year, Liam

Barrett; Stage Three Electrical Apprentice of the Year, Zak Daubney; Stage Four Electrical Apprentice of the Year, Ethan Timmins.

Technical Award, Harrison Edwards; Professional Conduct Award, Michelle Ncube.

Long service award winners:

25 years: Gregg Matthews, director; Clive Thomas, H&S manager; Mark Smith, commissioning manager; Richard White, senior qualifying supervisor; Leigh Baillon, electrical project manager, maintenance and small works; John Fern, senior mechanical site manager; Nigel Dean, senior mechanical site manager; Andrew Hough, approved electrician; Darrell Riley, approved electrician; Steve O'Doherty, approved electrician; and Tony Sarno, electrician.

10 years: Paul Wood, contracts manager; Syed Zadi, mechanical project manager; Matthew Biggs, senior mechanical design engineer; Graham Taylor, senior mechanical design engineer; Mandy Poyner, senior revit engineer; Tom Chambers, revit engineer; Michelle Laing, administrator; and Nathan Wilson, approved electrician.

Forest site is the 'top dog' of camping holidays

A popular forest getaway has been named among the best campsites in the country — and the most dog friendly.

Sherwood Pines Campsite, in Edwinstowe, secured a triple set of commendations at the Campsites.co.uk 2025 Camping and Glamping Awards.

The site won the National Top Dog Award, making it the best dog friendly site in England, and also took home Best Caravan Park in the East Midlands and was named runner up for Best Family Campsite in the East Midlands.

Set in 40 acres of woodland and surrounded by walking trails and cycling routes, the campsite also

boasts top facilities, spacious pitches and a range of family activities on offer — including the nearby Go Ape experience. Sherwood Pines Campsite has a 4.89/5 star rating on Campsites.co.uk, with 98% saying they would recommend the site.

Guests have praised the site with comments including "[The] site is absolutely immaculate in the most gorgeous setting" and "can't wait to come back, absolutely faultless".

"We're absolutely thrilled to have been recognised in this year's Campsites.co.uk awards," said Spencer Pettit, director of Sherwood Pines Campsite. To win the Top Dog award, Best Caravan Park in

the East Midlands, and runner-up for Best Family Campsite is an incredible achievement for our team. We're passionate about creating a welcoming, relaxed space for everyone to enjoy the beauty of Sherwood Pines.

"Our new semi-private glade with serviced pitches is the latest step in giving visitors more choice and comfort, and we're so proud to see that hard work being recognised."

The annual awards aim to highlight the best camping, glamping, and touring sites across the UK, celebrating sites which go above and beyond for their guests throughout the year.