

Working with: Oxfordshire County Council - Ben Payne



We caught up with Ben Payne, Apprenticeship Manager for Oxfordshire County Council at its latest Improvement Practitioner Graduation Event in February 2023.

Why are apprenticeships in general important to Oxfordshire County Council?

Our approach to apprenticeships here at Oxfordshire County Council is very much central to our learning and development function.

As we are a local authority we basically cover and deal with every industry and sector imaginable and as such we currently deliver just over fifty different apprenticeship standards at the council varying from level 2 all the way to level 7.

We work with CQM to deliver our lean apprenticeships, such as the Improvement Practitioner Level 4 and we have just started with learners on the Quality Practitioner Level 4 programme too.

Having the opportunity to deliver apprenticeships in line with our values and what we want to achieve in terms of organisational goals is intrinsic. We really value the opportunities provided by apprenticeships to get new people into the organisation, as well as supporting CPD and our existing workforce to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours to grow within the organisation and attain professional qualifications.

How important is it to work with the right training providers?

The way that we work with training providers and value the relationship here at Oxfordshire County Council, with apprenticeship training in particular, is extremely important.

I find quite often employers aren't very interested in that relationship, they just want training providers to come in and deliver training, without much input and before you know it apprenticeships start to fail and you can't reap the rewards of the programmes.

What we do as an organisation is carry out regular progress reviews and reports to make sure our apprentices are not only succeeding but thriving on their apprenticeship journey.

With CQM Training & Consultancy this happens every few weeks and I must say that relationship we have with CQM really shows the benefit of how apprenticeship support from a training provider can make an apprentice relish their apprenticeship journey and therefore make a valuable difference to the organisation as a whole.



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Working with: **Oxfordshire County Council - Caroline French**



We caught up with Caroline French, Business Improvement Team Leader for Oxfordshire County Council at its latest Improvement Practitioner Graduation Event in February 2023.

Caroline, please introduce yourself and your aims

I was recruited by Oxfordshire County Council in 2020 to come on board and create a strategy as to how can we as an organisation embed continuous improvement and incorporate lean methodology within the whole organisation and workforce.

Why has OCC invested in CI/lean apprenticeships?

I am passionate about and qualified in lean methodology, so I wanted to have the opportunity to spread that throughout the organisation. The benefits of lean and having the apprenticeship model that we have here allows us to embed both the lean methodology and also the process improvements, efficiencies and naturally savings that come through.

It's a win-win for an organisation like us as not only do we promote personal development for our workforce, allowing us to attract, retain and develop talent, but we get the support in terms of the apprenticeship funding that enables us to access effective training for our employees.



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In addition, the new ways of working are really important because that's where then going back to the vision and the aims, we see change, how those changes were made and the difference they make, to then living those changes. So why lean in a nutshell?

Lean is the apprenticeship that actually allows us to spread the right messages, spread that learning and embed that culture for the future of our organisation.

How has CQM supported you to implement CI/lean?

We're so lucky as an organisation to be able to have found a partner in CQM Training & Consultancy and especially with our Development Coach, Alan.

Our mindsets really match between our organisations, and I think that's one of the important reasons for the successes that we've had is because we're in sync.

We both know what we're looking to deliver for our organisation and what we're trying to accomplish, to support our learners develop, our organisation to adopt that continuous improvement culture, realising the benefits of lean and ultimately adding value for our end users.

We're grateful to have been able to have this opportunity and look forward to many more years to keep this going.

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Working with:

Oxfordshire County Council - Alan Clark, Development Coach



We caught up with our Development Coach for CQM, Alan Clark, at the Oxfordshire County Council Improvement Practitioner Graduation Event as he shared his insight on how important it is for employers to buy in to apprenticeships.

Why is it important for organisations to invest in apprenticeships?

I believe the importance of employers investing and buying into apprenticeships is hugely beneficial mainly, for two reasons.

Firstly, it is the structured method of learning that is gained and supported throughout the apprenticeship which of course, becomes an integral part of the business mindset as it benefits everyone concerned.

Secondly, the enhanced knowledge, skills and behaviours gained by each apprentice allows them to excel in roles that they may not have been so comfortable with previously. As they become involved and exude greater confidence and understanding, it forms a natural process for them and further strengthens the overall business capabilities.

For me, these apprenticeships are key to people development, both from the individual success and reward of having worked so hard to achieve an exceptional qualification, but also what that success and newly learnt skills brings back into the business.

There is nothing better than having home grown talent and Oxford CC are testament to having many exceptional apprentices who have gone on to bigger and greater roles within the business. Something I know generates a fantastic Return on Investment, and further enhances and supports those stakeholders like Caroline and her team who are making a difference.



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Caroline French, Business Improvement Team Leader

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Working with: **Oxfordshire County Council - Philip Alderton**



We caught up with Philip Alderton, Business Improvement Officer for Oxfordshire County Council at its latest Improvement Practitioner Graduation Event in February 2023.

How has your team set about supporting your employees on lean apprenticeships?

We have created a Business Improvement team to support our apprentices throughout their journey from start to finish.

Our team takes care of the internal logistics of the programmes including any organisation that is required, making sure people are aware and attend any meetings, ensuring everyone knows the key contacts. What we've also done is set up a teams site where the apprentices can post comments and have general discussions, which has built a really good community and effective support network.

We also conduct 1:1 mentoring with each of the apprentices, meeting at least once per month or as often as needed, giving them full support.

Lean can be considered to be all about 'manufacturing', and not relevant for any other sector. That couldn't be farther from the truth and we help to provide the context for the mentees in how you can apply to their role, within our organisation which is very service based and across the public sector.

On top of that, we have maintained a very strong relationship with our training providers at CQM Training & Consultancy, working closely with the Development Coach Alan and the wider team. By building up that relationship we're ensuring that our apprentices get the best quality and support throughout the journey.

It's also been a lot of fun to meet people from across the organisation, learn what they do and see how they are improving the service for the people and residents of Oxfordshire.



"I think having support from your employer is so important. Working with our Business Improvement team on the apprenticeship has been really helpful because we were all given mentors when we started.

Alan's support combined with our Business Improvement team in terms of the coaching and the mentoring has just made the whole programme really enjoyable and really good fun as well."

Rebecca & Lizzie, Improvement Practitioner Graduates



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Working with: **Oxfordshire County Council - Apprentice Perspective**



We caught up with the Oxfordshire County Council apprentices, Rebecca McNaught, Lizzie Hale and Shey Allison at its latest Improvement Practitioner Graduation Event in February 2023 for their insights from a learner perspective.

Rebecca, how have you found the support provided from OCC?

I think having support from your employer is so important. Working with our Business Improvement team on the apprenticeship has been really helpful because we were all given mentors when we started. Right from the beginning they were able to help us choosing our projects, making sure we made the most well-informed decisions, support with any obstacles, right up to the very end where they were even sitting on our end point assessments. They weren't allowed to speak but we knew they were there and that really helped me personally get through the whole apprenticeship.

Lizzie, how has the support been from CQM Training & Consultancy?

I would say the support we've had from everyone has been outstanding including our Business Improvement team as well as the people at CQM Training & Consultancy, especially our Development Coach, Alan.

I think Alan has just been such a supportive figure throughout our apprenticeship. We started our programme in national lockdown during the pandemic so unfortunately, we had to do all of our workshops virtually. Despite this, they were still very interactive and actually we really gelled as a team.

Alan made sure everyone's voice was heard, he included everyone, he always gave really valuable feedback and he was always available if you needed a one to one session. Alan kept on top of everyone's assignments and really pushed to make sure we were achieving our full potential as well.

So, I think his support combined with our Business Improvement team in terms of the coaching and the mentoring has just made the whole programme really enjoyable and really good fun as well.



"We have maintained a very strong relationship with our training providers at CQM Training & Consultancy, working closely with the Development Coach Alan Clark and the wider team.

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Philip Alderton, Business Improvement Officer

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Working with:

Oxfordshire County Council - Apprentice Perspective (continued)



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What has been your biggest takeaway from your apprenticeship?

Lizzie: For me personally it is the skills that you learn just by doing the apprenticeship, not only what you're actually studying but all of the soft skills that you pick up along the way.

To give some examples of the soft skills I picked up, I would say presenting feedback, building relationships across the organisation, really building up confidence. When you look back and reflect on where you were when you started and then comparing that to the end you can really see such a big difference in yourself.


I would also say in addition to all the skills that you're taking away, to have those soft skills that not only benefit your professional life but your personal life as well that's my biggest takeaway from the apprenticeship.

Shey: My biggest takeaway is that I now have a new role and I think that was because I simply did the apprenticeship and picked up the knowledge and skills to progress. I think without that, it wouldn't have given me the ability and confidence to step up so that was the highlight of the apprenticeship.

I would also say meeting other likeminded colleagues on the programme, from all different backgrounds and walks of life, was a fresh perspective and made for a nice supportive group.

It has been really encouraging to see people start from the bottom and make their way to the top, and the individual journeys we all went on.

Rebecca: My biggest takeaway from the apprenticeship is that it has opened up the whole organisation and made me more confident to contact people that don't necessarily work on my team. This has made it so much easier to get help and support from the wider team, working collaboratively, and that's carried on following on from the apprenticeship which is really pleasing.



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Lizzie Hale,
Improvement Practitioner
Graduate

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