

Careers and Skills – Platform Housing Group – Transcript

Gary Woodman: Interviewer – CEO of the Worcester Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP)

Linda Gittings: Interviewee – Apprentice and Qualifications Manager – Platform Housing Group

Gary Woodman: Hello my name is Gary Woodman, I'm chief executive of the Worcester local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) and welcome to this episode of the Making Connections Skills and Careers podcast series from the Career's Hub Team. Could you tell me a little bit about your business and what you do there?

Linda Gittings: Hello, my name is Linda Gittings and I am the Apprentice and Qualifications Manager for Platform Housing Group. Platform Housing Group is a registered social housing provider who operate across the country. We have over 45,000 homes which we manage and maintain. We employ over 1300 people in a wide range of jobs. Housing jobs, customer experience to trade and central services roles.

Gary Woodman: Can you tell us a little bit about the sector and industry that you work in and why it's such an exciting place to work and developer a career in?

Linda Gittings: Social housing is about providing properties for people to make into their homes. From flats to houses from young person schemes to retirement villages. These villages have restaurants, gyms and activities. We rent our properties to people at affordable rents to allow them to and to support them to live independently. We work with partners to build new properties. These are available to rent or to own through shared ownership schemes. We work to improve the communities within the areas where our properties are.

Gary Woodman: And what's the thing that really drives you and makes you proud to work for your company and the role that you do?

Linda Gittings: I love my role as it gives me the opportunity to help young people as to what is available to them after school. With our apprenticeships you see them grow into in skills and knowledge so that they are able to become great colleagues to work with. I've been working within the housing sector for many years. It's a very rewarding and worthwhile sector to be part of because it supports people by providing good quality homes and services that make great communities to live in.

Gary Woodman: What are the roles that currently exist within your business and how wide in terms of variety and skills are they?

Linda Gittings: A with any other large businesses we have opportunities available in departments like HR, finance, marketing and comms, admin, health and safety. As well as specialist roles within the housing teams. Roles like housing officers, management officers, allocations workers. We have opportunities in areas such as development programme or project surveillance and we support a host of construction roles like electrical, gas, plumbing, carpentry, roofing and grounds maintenance as well as multi skilled operatives.

Gary Woodman: So, within those different job roles what type of works involved?

Linda Gittings: the roles undertaken support the work they carry out. I.e. electrician would be able to carry out any work in one of our properties which was relating to all aspects of domestic electrical repair or installation. A letting or empties properties officer would be able to process an online

housing application, verify the information and look after an empty property from the notice period to when the new resident was signing the tenancy for their new home.

Gary Woodman: And do you think it's skills or qualifications that employers are looking for from potential employees?

Linda Gittings: For the majority of our roles we need a minimum of five GCSE level 4 or above. For some of our roles we are able to support people with lower levels of qualifications. We will help people to gain the qualifications that they need. We will help people to reach their full potential. We want to see young people bring with them into the workplace an eagerness to learn a willingness to challenge and to be brave not, to just accept things have done this way because they've always been done this way when they know there's an alternative way that would bring benefits to the process. This takes great communication skills and maturity to do this effectively. The behaviours we look for are as important as the skills.

Gary Woodman: What skills do you think will be in demand for the future? Particularly thinking of things like digital and the changes that we're going to see in the way we work after COVID?

Linda Gittings: All our colleagues need to have good communication, time management and teamwork skills. Due to the variety of the roles we have, and the other skills are more job specific they could include IT skills, presentation skills, problem solving and technical and practical skills to suit the roles being undertaken. One of the most important attributes to have is an openness and a willingness to learn new skills alongside the ability to listen. The ability to adapt and change is vital organisations and roles will be constantly evolving.

Gary Woodman: How would a young person enter into your organisation? And then what is their opportunity to grow through that organisation?

Linda Gittings: We have a mix of entry point requirements according to the role that's going to be undertaken. Our entry points will suit people that want to undertake apprenticeships. We let our entry points for graduates, and we have entry points to people to come into the organisation with low levels of skills and knowledge. Opportunities for us to give them the skills and knowledge and the qualifications.

Gary Woodman: What would be your top tips for young people today?

Linda Gittings: We would have to say that work experience is a very worthwhile exercise to show your commitment as a young person to your future. If you are invited for an interview do your homework. Find out about the organisation and the sector they work in, both nationally and local details. Make sure that your CV shows you as a person not just a set of qualifications.

Gary Woodman: And finally, do you hold any open days or events so that young people could come and see the work environment because it's very different to a school or college. Therefore, getting them to come out and see the work environment and where you do your work, I think is very important. Are there any opportunities for them to come and see that?

Linda Gittings: we have supported careers events, work experience and specific school requests for many years and they are a great way to gain your first understanding of our company and the sector of social housing. Since lockdown, we've been faced with how we can continue to undertake this with the current restrictions. We need to make sure that we keep our colleagues and our community safe. So, we are looking at doing things a bit different. Having virtual work experience. Having downloads from a variety of our colleagues from all over the organisation so that you can get a true

understanding of what it's like to be in their role. A way of doing podcasts with other people in the offices that can't normally take part in careers events. What this will do it will give you an advantage because you'll be able to connect with more people in the organisation, people that you can't usually connect with easily due to their commitments. It will give you more access to subject matter experts. We hope we'll be able to make it interesting; we hope we're going to be able to make it interactive. It's very much let's see what we can do we're here to continue to support you and we want to continue to support you.

Gary Woodman: If you're a young person listening, make sure you go to the Skills for Worcestershire website where you can find a range of support on offer to help you decide the career pathway for you. So that's <http://www.skills4worcestershire.co.uk>. Thanks for listening.