

Careers & Skills – The Community Housing Group – Transcript

Jacqui Morley-Brooker Interviewer – Worcestershire Careers Hub Team

Nick Parker Interviewee – Executive Manager - Community Housing Group

Jacqui Morley-Brooker: Welcome to this Career Skills podcast episode and I work for the Worcestershire Careers Hub team. Today I am joined by Nick Parker, Executive Manager at the Community Housing Group. Nick, could you start by telling us a bit about yourself.

Nick Parker: Okay, The Community Housing Group, we're based up in Wyre Forest. We are social landlord, but we are quite big social landlords, in sense of what we actually do. So, we have 6500 properties that we look after. A lot of those are sheltered housing for older people but we also have our own works team Depot. They build houses and they repair houses. We also have a care arm, so the old people were in there provided support and care for them. We then have a call centre and that takes calls my tenants but also could be telecare and we provide that services for other organisations so, that's a big part of us. We do develop home that's part of our construction team. Then behind all of that then got the HR, the IT the finance, all those bits and pieces. The Community Housing Group also have a Vestia Community Trust, which I look after, and we provide training for unemployed people and All Star and staff. So, we are a medium sized housing association, but we are very broad in what we do, because we have all those different services. We have about 150 staff within the organisation.

Jacqui Morley-Brooker: So what would your advice be for potential young people, sort of aged 16 to 18, who are a little unsure as to what the future holds but are considering apprenticeships but there will be some apprenticeships available but they may be fewer in number. What would your advice be for young people to perhaps gain other experience in those other work skills?

Nick Parker: to some extent it's irrespective as to whether it's an apprenticeship or University or anything I think it's you're at school which is such a great opportunity. Get your English your Maths, those basic core subjects, get them under your belt they will reward you. I still apply for jobs and I put down my English my maths O levels and GCSE. You've got to have them and I did it go back to them. So yeah, it's worth spending that time getting those qualifications under your belt and not having to come and have to do them at a later date, it will pay you rewards. The other bits I think you touched on is work experience and lived experiences. The fact that they may have volunteered, and you may have had a part time job. You're showing that aptitude take instruction to get on to have good days work. All of those bits as well and I think for us in many two jobs, it is about your personality and interpersonal skills, you're a team worker your a can do you take responsibility, all of those things I'm looking for when I'm interviewing. I can teach you the computer programme that we use. I can teach you how a process but actually changing the person, how you are and how you represent Community Housing Group, how you deal with our customers that half of it. If you come to an interview and I think "God, my customers are going to like you and will want to do business with you" come join us I can help you with the other skills. If you've got the foundations of your English and Maths and you are able to us IT, we're away we're off on the journey together. I think is it is hard work at school, but it will pay dividends don't give up on it get your head down. Get your English and Maths and your other qualifications and then we will be opening the door to you.

Jacqui Morley-Brooker: As you touched on it's the extracurricular things as well that's going to build your confidence and those interpersonal skills that are really very valuable to an employer as well, as you say.

Nick Parker: It is. Okay, this is outside work, but my son works for the police, but he has worked in a timber yard. He did some youth work, he did a bit of office work but, that rounded experience when it came to the interview, and he played rugby – he played a sport – but that rounded experience that he was able to present it stood him out. Again, it's going to be really difficult in the next couple of years it's going to be a lot people looking for work about. You've got to stand out, just a bit more than that other person. Doesn't have to be amazing stuff day, that you've been to the Himalayas volunteering, you may have just done something around the corner, but it shows your commitment to do something to give something and that will stand out in an interview. All across our business we will be recruiting people and we will be recruiting young people, there are going to be opportunities there.

Jacqui Morley-Brooker: What advice might you give to employers who are experiencing the same challenges as you are. What advice she would give them in their plans going forward?

Nick Parker: It is difficult and again talking to a lot of our apprentices you know, University is going to be very different a lot of people go to University for, not just the learning but the whole life experience. That is going to be tapered at the moment and therefore, may be going to work and doing your studies is the better option. I think seeing other people talking about it you know they've completed qualifications high level they've got their no debt. So, I think it will be a good route for people, young people who want to carry on with. So, as a business if you're going to attract that talent in you've got to adapt, and you've got to work and you've got to make it open for apprentices. The thing for me is the fresh talent, you know. We've been doing some work using social media to recruit people for our support services unemployed. I'm not good with social media I'm not comfortable with it. The young people are comfortable with it. They are ahead of the game. So, use of technology which is going to grow and grow in so many areas where not only are they perform performing a useful tasks for the business but they absolutely bringing in fresh thinking and that can be a challenge and you've got to mix the old with the new. But, there our future talent whether its consumers, workforce, I ideas inventors, so bring them into the business. Don't shut them out. Bring they're our future. And again apprenticeships when you look some of the big employers in Worcestershire, at senior officers, directors, chief executives who came in as apprentices. it is an entry into employment and people will go the whole way through organisations and it's a great pathway into businesses.

Jacqui Morley-Brooker: Great thank you very much for joining us today Nick. Young people listening to this podcast please make sure you go to the Skills4Worcestershire website, where you can find the full range of support on offer to help you identify the right career path for you that's www.skills4worcestershire.co.uk. Thank you.