

Apprenticeship Initiative Winner 2015

Faithorn Farrell Timms



Faithorn Farrell Timms (FFT) aims to inspire young people to join the built environment professions by offering apprentices an organisation in which they can learn real, practical skills and gain access to partners' experience.

FFT has five apprentices and more on the way, working with Chartered Surveyors Training Trust to recruit promising youngsters from the local community who are committed to a professional career but unable or unwilling to pursue through an FE/HE route.

Apprentices enjoy a lively, inspiring and stimulating learning environment and are encouraged to actively contribute to the Practice. One of FFT's 16-year-old apprentices co-ordinates CPD sessions, inviting suppliers, manufacturers and distributors to offer insights into the latest techniques and processes pertinent to FFT. They gain hands-on experience with real projects like the design and specification of the office kitchen and management of their technical library.

Apprentices attend technical college or university each week and FFT works with RICS and CSTT to agree mechanisms for weekly spot checks to monitor progress. Every few months apprentices are assigned to different teams to broaden their experience of the Practice. Junior staff gather vital management experience by mentoring apprentices, which in turn has allowed them to develop professionally and progress their own careers. Continuous support is provided through internal coaching and project-based mentoring is provided by partners and associates.

Apprentices hold CSCS cards and are regular visitors to building sites. They take part in inspections and attend on-site meetings to understand how to resolve issues and move a project forward, and develop an appreciation of the client's agenda. FFT have arranged with local authority and registered social landlord clients to allow apprentices full access to the people and processes at work behind the scenes in their organisations.

Apprentices are treated as equals, engaging in the same work as other employees and set tasks for which they are fully accountable, including working under pressure to tight deadlines. This creates an atmosphere of equality and inclusivity, where lessons learned are shared and successes celebrated with equal measure. All apprentices are paid a proper salary and their contribution is recognised through incremental increases and higher levels of responsibility.

The achievements of apprentices are rewarded by internal recognition, financial bonuses and captured in a quarterly E-newsletter, publicised through press releases and tweets. So far, FFT's approach has created two national RICS Surveyor award winners and one BSC H&S champion (Georgia Clements pictured above).

FFT is dedicated to providing a sustainable workforce and appreciates that its staff are its greatest asset. Its apprenticeship programme is helping young people, the local community and definitely favoured by clients as their win rate with tenders improves, especially in the public sector. The social and commercial benefits of employing apprentices for FFT are substantial.

Judges comments

FFT has made a significant investment both financially and with time to provide a structured apprenticeship within a professional practice – which traditionally would not be employers of apprentices. The scheme looks for individuals from local communities as young as 16.

This is not a graduate scheme but a true apprenticeship which allows progression through to degree standard. It is the flexibility that it offers, as the individual truly learns what skills they have and where they can best add value, that struck a chord.

Number of staff:	88
Turnover:	£6 million



Finalists

- Faithorn Farrell Timms
- Turner & Townsend