

Company supports modern apprentices with more than training

Edinburgh-based learning provider, Direct Partners has more than 120 modern apprentices working in a range of sectors including childcare, business skills and tech.

Founder of the company, Debra Tracy, said: “We don’t just offer training – we craft futures, focusing on skills valued by employers and aligned with digital transformation.”

Learners supported by Direct Partners are empowered through a pre-employment programme, developed with partners which include SDS Careers, Capital City Partnership and the Department for Work and Pensions, offering two weeks of industry training and guaranteed interviews.

The interview process is much less formal and stressful with hands on play and stay sessions for childcare apprenticeships which offer employers genuine insights.

There is also one-to-one support for people with additional learning needs, and scribes for those with English as a second language.

Debra said: “Some of our learners come to us with no confidence or unsure how to navigate the working world. The programme helps them make an impact from day one because

they're prepared with prior learning.

"One of our first candidates started in an entry-level job and is now a manager at 25."

Modern Apprentice

A childcare Modern Apprentice at an Edinburgh nursery, who felt "defeated" until engaging with Direct Partners, said: "I'm a migrant woman who had given up on the possibility of working in my profession. I was supported throughout my learning, even on a personal level. Now, I embrace my future with gratitude."

Beyond qualifications, Direct Partners builds a sense of community through Saturday Play workshops for childcare apprentices who need additional support.

The workshops, scheduled to accommodate full-time workers and parents, are aligned with training and cover themes like teamwork and health and safety, promote learning and best practice and allow the apprentices to socialise. Apprentices have face time with assessors and develop meta skills through group activities on numeracy, communication and problem solving.

Debra said: "Our workshops have become a place for community and growth. Apprentices return long after completing their training because they cherish the connections they've made."

Since 2016, the eight-strong team has trained 590 apprentices with employers including Visit Scotland, Skanska, Enjoy Leisure and Daddy Day Care.

Apprentices are guided through individual learning plans and quarterly reviews, which support industry and apprentice needs and allow feedback and collaboration with employers.

More than 12,000 employers support Scottish Apprenticeships,

which are work-based learning opportunities or jobs with industry-recognised qualifications.

Scottish Apprenticeships are made for business, developed with employers to ensure they are demand-led and responsive to workforce skills needs.

Debra said: “Apprenticeships are a ‘win-win’ – apprentices earn while they learn while employers cultivate a loyal, skilled workforce.

“The learning from apprenticeships is gold standard. It’s a phenomenal way to develop your career and keep abreast of industry expectations and tech changes in the workplace.

“Apprenticeships also ensure employees remain at the cutting edge – we have schoolteachers, NHS staff and senior managers on our tech apprenticeships.”

Debra’s team also leads by example as they have all embarked on Modern Apprenticeships. Debra said: “We’re delighted to be a finalist in the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards, helping to demonstrate the impact and value apprenticeships bring to industry.”

The winner of the Leading in Learning Provision category will be revealed at the Scottish Apprenticeship Awards, which takes place on 27 February in the run-up to Scottish Apprenticeship Week (3 to 7 March).

apprenticeships.scot/awards

