

Life as an apprentice

Meet Jess, a Level 6 apprentice at Newcastle Building Society



Can you tell us a bit about your career journey so far?

I am very grateful to be able to progress up the career ladder through apprenticeships. My Level 3 apprenticeship allowed me to gain industry-specific knowledge and experience while undertaking a recognised qualification and learning from professionals. This has opened the door for me to enrol on the Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship in Digital and Technology Solutions at Newcastle Building Society.

Did you always know you wanted to work in Information Technology (IT)?

When I was growing up, my dream was to work with planes, either as a pilot or an engineer. I found myself looking for things to keep me busy during the lockdowns, and I started to learn how to code. I then became really interested in IT. So, a new hobby allowed me to reconsider my future career goals.

Did you always want to do an apprenticeship?

I always presumed my journey into the working world would be: I complete my GCSEs, go on to do my A Levels and take a gap year, before moving on to university and finally starting a job. The pandemic changed those plans. The travel adventures I planned had to be put on hold. I didn't want to waste time waiting for the world to open up again, so I began looking at other options, which led me to apprenticeships.

How did you find your Level 3 apprenticeship?

I looked online for Software Development apprenticeships in my local area. I really liked the sound of one at Newcastle Building Society and thought it would be a great opportunity. I applied by submitting my CV and a cover letter through the company website. The next stage of the recruitment process was for me to complete a technical skills test. I passed this element and was invited to attend an Assessment Centre, which included an interview.

What is your role at Newcastle Building Society?

I started in the Web Services Team as a Software Developer apprentice. My role was to design, build and maintain the front-end online banking systems. During the apprenticeship, I developed an interest in cybersecurity. There was then an opportunity for me to move to a cybersecurity role.

My new role is to provide central support to maintain an effective Information Security Management System. I also have to keep up to date with industry trends and incidents to ensure the infrastructure of the business is protected. I work alongside colleagues in different departments within the organisation, including: Infrastructure, DevOps, Legal, Software Development and Finance.



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How was your apprenticeship delivered?

My Level 3 apprenticeship was delivered remotely with Baltic Apprenticeships. To make sure I completed all of my apprenticeship tasks and met my deadlines, I set reminders in my calendar and blocked out time. My manager was supportive, which was great, especially when approaching my exams and I needed additional time to focus on completing my projects.

What have been your apprenticeship highlights?

I have had some amazing opportunities because I took the apprenticeship route. I was very fortunate to be Highly Commended in the BT Advanced Apprentice of the Year at the North East Regional National Apprenticeship Awards. I also won the Innovating and Improving award at the Newcastle Building Society Early Talent Awards. Plus, I volunteer at a local primary school running an afterschool coding club on behalf of Newcastle Building Society.



How has your apprenticeship allowed you to progress?

After completing my Level 3 Software Development Technician apprenticeship, I spoke to the Early Talent Manager about my career aspirations and my ultimate goal to be a subject matter expert within cybersecurity. The Newcastle Building Society were advertising for a Level 6 Digital and Technology Solutions apprentice, which was brilliant for me. With the support of the business, I applied for the position. Following a successful interview, I have been enrolled on the Level 6 Digital and Technology apprenticeship.

What advice would you share with others?

Apprenticeships are a great way to learn and gain experience whilst getting paid! It will give you the ability to stand out to future employers as not only do you have recognised qualifications, but you also have experience within the industry where you're applying your knowledge. Remember:

- Don't give up after a setback
- Practise interview questions
- Be yourself
- Don't be scared to take the leap!

What does being an Apprenticeship Ambassador involve?

I wanted to be an ambassador to raise awareness that apprenticeships aren't just in the trades sector, in addition to inspiring young people and adults with the opportunities out there. One of my highlights of being an ambassador was announcing the winner of apprentice of the year at the Tees Valley BME awards in Middlesbrough on behalf of the North East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. I'd totally recommend becoming an ambassador as it's a fantastic community to be a part of! Apprentice insight:

"I am very grateful to be able to progress up the career ladder through apprenticeships. My Level 3 apprenticeship allowed me to gain industry-specific knowledge and experience...and opened the door for me to enrol on the Level 6 Degree Apprenticeship in Digital and Technology Solutions."

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