

# From Fast Jets to Fast Food



In 2013, having spent the previous twenty two years as an aircraft engineer in the Royal Air Force, Darren Boothroyd took over ownership of his local fish and chip shop. Based in the North East of Scotland, Fochaber's Fish Bar is a thriving local business at the heart of the community.

Darren currently employs two full time and five part time team members. Darren and his wife Ruth also work full time in the business. For the first eighteen months, Darren had to learn the trade, understand the characteristics of his business and also set about building a good local reputation. At the same time, he wanted to establish a knowledgeable, well trained and motivated team of employees.

When Darren heard about the Modern Apprenticeship qualifications, he was keen to find out if they could work for his team. Having spent much of his RAF career either being trained or training young engineers himself, Darren had seen the immense benefits of a well-trained and motivated workforce. It made sense that this same approach would work in a fish and chip shop: admittedly a very different business but still all about the work ethics and commitment of the people employed.

## This is Darren's summary of how he and his team got involved in Modern Apprenticeship qualifications:

It was in the NFFF's Fish Friers review magazine that I read an article highlighting the Seafish Modern Apprenticeship scheme and thought that this would be an ideal time for me to look at enrolling my team of young fryers and servers on one of these apprenticeships.

I followed the link in the article and found myself on the Seafood Training Academy website which gave a comprehensive overview of the apprenticeships scheme and a list of the nationwide training providers and a few days later a meeting was arranged with my local provider, Polaris Learning Ltd.

The qualification consists of a selection of mandatory and optional units and with the help of the assessor I was able to choose the units that best suited my business and my business ethos. After initial interviews with their nominated assessor each member of staff really bought into the scheme and I could immediately sense a positive change in their attitude towards work. Every few weeks the assessor would visit and carefully go through the next unit or observe them carrying out their job.

It really was an easy process with no disruption to the day to day running of the shop. We now have 3 team members who have completed the qualification and another just about to enrol.

I have spent a career either being trained or training people and recognise the rewards that a well-motivated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable team can bring. Through my experience I would strongly recommend anyone in the sea food business to take advantage of this great opportunity.

## What has happened since the qualifications?

As a result of the Modern Apprenticeship qualifications, all of the team have developed new skills, have increased knowledge and increased confidence. For example, Isla, Darren's full time fryer, who has been with Fochaber's Fish Bar since Darren took over the shop, is now ready for greater responsibility within a management role.



It is Darren's vision that Isla will be able to take on more of the day to day management of the shop which will free him up and allow him to focus on increasing the success of the business and in time, increasing the employment opportunities within the local community. At the same time, Isla can continue to grow her skills and knowledge base, and build a successful and rewarding career in the fish and chip industry. Katie and Alana are still working in the shop and are continuing to develop their new skills. It's clear to see that they have both benefitted from their training and are now equally ready to take on greater responsibilities.

As we go to print Fochabers Fish Bar has just been awarded the National Federation of Fish Fryers Quality Award and selected as one of Fry Magazine's Best 50 Fish and Chip Shops in the UK 2015. They are also shortlisted for Independent Takeaway Fish & Chip Shop of the year 2016.



## A bit about the Modern Apprenticeship qualifications

### When did the first batch of apprentices start?

The first batch of apprentices started in May last year at the beginning of contract year 2014-15.

### When did they finish?

They all finished close to each other, between August and November 2014.

### What was the title of the final qualification?

Three other employees who undertook the Level 2 Modern Apprenticeship did the 'Food Sales & Service Skills' pathway whilst one employee did a Level 3 Modern Apprenticeship in 'Food & Drink Operations'. Within both qualifications, they had a huge variety of units to choose from that matched their job role in the workplace.

### What in the words of the employer were the three main benefits/improvements seen in the apprentices?

After initial interviews with their nominated assessor each member of staff really bought into the scheme and Darren could immediately sense a positive change in their attitude towards work.

As a result of the Modern Apprenticeship qualifications, the team have all developed new skills, have increased knowledge and increased confidence.

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