

## FACILITIES AND ESTATES - APPRENTICE OF THE WEEK

# CHRIS BARNETT

## LEVEL 3 SCIENCE INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

**CHRIS BARNETT**

Multi-Skilled Engineering Apprenticeship

**Meet Chris Barnett,  
an apprentice  
at Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust.**

**What apprenticeship are you studying  
and what does the study involve?**

I am studying a Level 3 Science Industry Maintenance Technician with a mechanical bias. Therefore, my study involves attending South Tyneside College for one day a week to carry out my HNC (Higher National Certificate) in Mechanical Engineering. In the first two years of my apprenticeship, I completed a BTEC Level 3 in Mechanical Engineering, achieving a Distinction/Distinction. I then moved onto my two year HNC course in September 2020 and it should be completed by May 2022. The academic side of the apprenticeship has allowed me to learn and understand the theory side of both mechanical and electrical engineering giving me a broader range of knowledge to apply when working in my hospital.

**Why did you want to do the apprenticeship?**

The main reason that I wanted to do an apprenticeship is because I have always been very practical and hands on from a young age. My hobbies and interests played a great part in making me realise that an apprenticeship is what I wanted to do. The NHS provides an excellent apprenticeship program with ample training and support. I have always shown a mechanical aptitude and knew that I wanted a career where my job and interests would intertwine. The options for mechanical based apprenticeships strongly lean towards the manufacturing sector which provides great opportunities but isn't for everyone and I knew that it wasn't for me. An apprenticeship with the NHS is perfect for me and gives me pride to know that I am contributing to making the patients' time in hospital as comfortable as possible.

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## What is your current role?

My role consists of maintaining different services in the hospital. This includes ventilation, steam services, heating, domestic water, drinking water as well as bigger projects such as full ward refurbishments. I enjoy my role because you can be doing a completely different job each day working on different pieces of equipment in different areas of the hospital. As the hospital provides a 24 hour service, I have also participated in large shut down jobs where the whole steam services in the hospital has been shut down so that we can carry out maintenance and repairs during the night. My role also involves training where I am sent on courses across the country for up to a week which gives me more knowledge on how to correctly carry out maintenance activities. This gives me competency on the correct operating procedures for different systems. Now as a final year apprentice, my role is becoming more independent and I am now trusted to carry out certain jobs around the hospital unsupervised.

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## How did you get into your current role?

From starting as an apprentice straight from school, I had some mechanical knowledge but I knew I had a lot to learn from the apprenticeship. Through development courses and studying at college I have gained a vast array of knowledge from colleagues, lecturers, course instructors, product manufacturers and many more. As I have gained more knowledge and practical experience, I have been trusted to carry out bigger jobs in my hospital and to partake in planned projects. Through this progression, I am continuously gaining confidence in the work I am carrying out and I am being trusted by my supervisors and manager to do more independent jobs. I currently only have a few months of my apprenticeship left. Through talks with my superiors in the trust, they are confident that there will be a permanent qualified job role available at the end of my apprenticeship.



### **What has been your proudest achievement on your apprenticeship to date?**

My proudest achievement from my apprenticeship so far is being awarded the Regional Apprentice of the Year Award in 2021 and being nominated for the IHEEM (Institute of Healthcare Engineering and Estate Management) National Apprentice of the Year Award reaching the

final five candidates. I was very proud of this achievement as I had worked hard in 2021 at college, work and on development courses, achieving a Distinction/Distinction in my BTEC and a Distinction in the first year of my HNC. I also participated in both water shut-downs and steam shut-downs at work. I excelled in my development courses achieving high grades which lead to commendations from managers and heads of the department. I travelled down to the IHEEM Conference in Manchester for the award ceremony. My successes were recognised by not only the Head of my Estate's Department but also the Head of Trust which also gave me great pride.

### **What do you want to do once you complete your apprenticeship?**

Once I have completed my apprenticeship, I would like to stay on at the hospital as I enjoy the work I do and contributing to the patients' services provided. I would like to possibly do a degree in Mechanical Engineering and my Trust have a scheme where in certain circumstances they would pay for employees to go to University one day a week to get a degree. With this further qualification, this could allow me to progress into managerial roles if I wanted to but for now I am very happy working practically and maintaining the different services at the hospital.

### **What would you say to someone considering an apprenticeship?**

Doing an apprenticeship is the best decision I have made and through the NHS it can be a job for life. There are some of the first NHS apprentices from the 1980s at my hospital.

They are now ready to retire but have been fortunate enough to be given a job after their apprenticeship. They have had a job that they love for all of their working life. The training provided and support available is phenomenal. If you were to move jobs after the apprenticeship, the qualifications gained are very impressive, as well as the reputation that your apprenticeship was carried out with the NHS. Not only do you gain impressive qualifications but you also gain knowledge from learning on the job where experienced colleagues pass on their knowledge and experience. There will always be a need for engineers in any industry and I believe that an engineering apprenticeship through the NHS is one of if not the best way to get into this industry.



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