

NHMF Awards 2026: Apprentice of the Year – Shortlist

- Lucy Hamer, Ian Williams Limited
- Ellie Marney, Qualis Property Solutions
- Raymond Callum Cathline, Prestige DPM Ltd
- Kirsten Jackson, Bell Group Ltd

Summary: This year there was tough competition with six strong entries for the Apprentice of the Year covering a range of ages, businesses, and apprenticeships. All showed a desire to learn, often going beyond the college syllabus or taking opportunities to use more advanced techniques or skills. They all wanted to use what they were learning to improve services and results. Dedication, drive, and commitment displayed throughout.

Why should this apprentice be Apprentice of the Year? What makes this apprentice stand out?

Lucy – consistently performs at a higher level, combining outstanding craft skills with maturity and resilience. She has demonstrated discipline and meticulous attention to detail, always looking for ways to do her work better, faster, and more safely, without compromising quality. Volunteering for demanding assignments.

Ellie – Exceptional apprentice (joined at 16 from school) whose maturity, determination to keep learning and drive to improve processes, while remaining authentic and approachable. She has demonstrated confidence, self-awareness, and clarity about her future.

Raymond – Demonstrates qualities of an outstanding apprentice — dedication, enthusiasm, professionalism, initiative, leadership, and a genuine passion for the industry, combined with a willingness to learn. He mentors fellow apprentices and shows maturity, leadership, and drive to improve.

Kirsten – Demonstrates exceptional curiosity, drive, and professionalism. She approaches every task not as a box to tick, but as an opportunity to understand, innovate, and improve.

Give an example where this apprentice has shown commitment to learning at college and another where they've shown commitment to learning in the workplace.

Lucy – Exceptional dedication to college studies, submitting her entire portfolio ahead of official deadlines. She actively seeks opportunities to broaden her practical knowledge and demonstrates adaptability.

Ellie – Demonstrated maturity, adaptability, and a strong commitment to achieve her qualification even when tutor and assessor changed near end. Shows initiative and integrates college learning with workplace applications.

Raymond – Consistently demonstrates an exceptional commitment to learning, both academically (after surgery) and at work. Ensured a thorough handover to colleagues before going on holiday.

Kirsten – Committed to learn in every aspect of her apprenticeship - at college, consistently pushes beyond the standard curriculum, a drive and genuine passion to master her craft. For an advanced decorative techniques module, she explored a highly intricate decorative finish (not part of prescribed syllabus), through independent research, hands-on experimentation to successfully replicate the complex effect. Demonstrated creativity, initiative, and technical

precision. During a surface preparation module, she researched specialist primers and treatments used in heritage restoration.

Outline a scenario, where this apprentice applied the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they've learned. How did they do this?

Lucy – demonstrated her college knowledge, skills, and behaviours on a project to repair 67 sash windows as part of cyclical decorations on a Grade II listed residential building.

Ellie – During significant change in materials ordering process, she developed a simple but innovative idea that enables operatives to order more easily, saving time and reducing errors. She combined learning with creativity, problem-solving and initiative.

Raymond – When a contract manager was on leave, Raymond volunteered to step up and oversee the commercial aspects of the contract (responsibility well beyond expectations of an apprentice). He took ownership of cost tracking, valuations, and supplier communication, demonstrating a clear understanding of commercial management and its impact on project delivery.

Kirsten – While redecorating a home, extensive water damage and a powdery, unstable surface, was uncovered. Kirsten immediately recognised a standard filler and paint approach would fail. She used her college learning on surface substrates and preparation to identify the need for a specialist stabilising sealer. She confidently discussed the solution with the site manager.

What evidence shows this apprentice takes Health & Safety and Compliance seriously?

Lucy – Proactive when planning and understanding risks, consistent and visible in daily practice demonstrating an on-site discipline. Also communicates with residents and finishes with an audited compliance check.

Ellie – Manages the subcontractor compliance folder, ensuring all insurance documents and certificates valid and up to date. She manages her own Health & Safety training diligently, completing every module and course on time and to a high standard.

Raymond – Although Health & Safety is not a core component of Quantity Surveyor, he has been proactive in understanding and upholding safety standards. He has attended toolbox talks, including asbestos awareness, manual handling, and working at height. He attends quarterly Health & Safety workshops.

Kirsten – Before any task, she conducts a personal risk assessment, flagging potential issues and meticulously inspects all tools and equipment before use. She always uses the correct PPE for the job at hand. She ensured a high-quality particulate respirator was used, not just a basic dust mask, when she undertook extensive surface sanding. She also wet-sanded certain areas to reduce airborne dust, creating a better working environment for everyone. She ensures correct disposal of waste materials.

List this apprentice's top three relevant personal qualities.

Lucy – Hardworking, conscientious, and motivated.

Ellie – Commitment (ownership), Approachability (and maturity), and desire to learn/grow.

Raymond – Initiative, resilience, and professionalism.

Kirsten – Proactive/self-motivated, honest, and ambitious.

How has this apprentice shown commitment to their own personal development and progression?

Lucy – Willing to step outside comfort zone to develop skills and experience. She actively seeks opportunities to work on diverse projects, including challenging and unfamiliar environments.

Ellie – Proactive steps to secure her future through researching potential opportunities and securing a job when apprenticeship ended.

Raymond – Strong commitment to his personal development and progression, with 100% attendance record at both college and work showing his dedication and reliability.

Kirsten – Outstanding commitment to personal growth and professional progression throughout her apprenticeship. She is always looking for opportunities to deepen her knowledge and enhance her technical skills, rather than simply completing coursework, going beyond expectations.

How has this apprentice inspired others?

Lucy – Willing to share her journey and support/mentor fellow apprentices. She gave a presentation with Q&A session to students on a school visit to Ian Williams' office.

Ellie – Volunteered to present at all-staff 'Coffee and Catch-Up' session (around 100) about her journey as an apprentice and her transition from school to work.

Raymond – leads by example, his dedication, professionalism, and positive attitude set a high standard that others naturally aspire to. He gives daily support and mentors, helping fellow apprentices grow in confidence and capability. He encouraged 2 former students to join as apprentices.

Kirsten – Her proactive and self-motivated approach inspires peers and senior colleagues. She is a great ambassador to young people and women. She challenges processes (not just completing tasks), identifies improvements, and raises the standard of quality for everyone around her. Her commitment to health and safety also has a positive influence on her team. She builds a culture of support and teamwork.

How does this apprentice contribute to the vision and goals of your organisation?

Lucy – Strong focus on customer satisfaction, integrity, and teamwork to ensure every job completed to the highest standard. Her conscientious approach and willingness to go the extra mile reflects organisation's commitment to deliver value through great local teams.

Ellie – Embodies their values of 'quality,' 'united,' 'accountability,' 'listening,' 'innovation' and 'smart decisions.'

Raymond – Plays an active role in supporting the organisation's vision of delivering excellence, integrity, and innovation in every aspect of its work. His commitment to learning and continuous improvement directly contributes to maintaining high standards. His reliability, professionalism, and a proactive attitude, strengthens team culture and sets a positive example for others.

Kirsten – Embodies organisation's commitment to excellence, professionalism, and continuous progression. Her meticulous attention to detail and technical skill contributes to its reputation for high-quality work and exceptional client satisfaction.