



Case study

CARLOS CORTACANS, HOSPITALITY TEAM MEMBER APPRENTICE, PGL

Carlos Cortacans is among the first apprentices in the UK to complete the new hospitality team member apprenticeship standard, launched in 2017. Despite having little previous experience of the catering industry, his apprenticeship has transformed him into a competent chef with a passion for cooking.



The apprentice

Carlos originally joined PGL, the UK's market leading provider of activity holidays and study courses for young people, as a kitchen assistant. Before that, he had no experience of the catering sector, aside from learning some basic cooking skills at home.

He worked in the role for three months before being offered a place on the company's hospitality team member apprenticeship programme.

The apprenticeship

Through the apprenticeship programme, Carlos experienced a mixture of on and off-the-job training. The practical learning mostly took place during his day-to-day job, and included making specific dishes, developing knife skills, time management and organisation, cleanliness and teamworking skills.

His off-the-job learning included theoretical knowledge, including recipes, allergy awareness, food safety and provenance, as well as maths and English functional skills. He was also given the opportunity to visit one of PGL's suppliers and a national catering event to broaden his knowledge.

Throughout the programme, Carlos received support from his line manager and colleagues to make sure he was applying what he had learnt correctly and safely. He is currently working through his end-point assessment, which involves a multiple choice test, an observation and business project, and a professional discussion, which allows an independent assessor to probe and explore the depth of the apprentice's knowledge.

The benefits

Carlos has come on in leaps and bounds since starting his apprenticeship. It has given him a focus and structure for his development, and has allowed him to work independently within the kitchen.

He's now able to manage a service himself and is passing on his knowledge by supporting others to develop their skills.

Breaking down the language barrier has been an additional benefit for Carlos. As a Spanish native, English isn't his first language, but the programme has vastly accelerated his learning and improved both his communication and understanding in the workplace.

Carlos has also been promoted twice during the programme – firstly to assistant chef, and then to a chef role. While he still has plenty to learn in becoming an experienced chef, his goal is to be involved in delivering high-quality food in a good value restaurant. Whatever he ultimately chooses to do, he's certain that it will involve many of the skills he's learnt through his apprenticeship.

What the apprentice says:

“The apprenticeship has been a big success for me. It definitely helped to speed up my learning and general progression in the kitchen. My manager took me on without any skills and very little capability to work alone on a shift - now I'm able to work independently, effectively and perform to a good standard. She regularly gives me feedback and encourages me to take on challenges.

“I am really happy to have been given the opportunity to complete this programme in a workplace that I enjoy, and it's increased my passion for cooking. It's given me the chance to learn a new set of skills which will help my future development, improve my English, achieve a qualification and gain experience of moving around England and working at the different PGL centres.”

Carlos Cortacans, Chef, PGL

For more information on how apprenticeships can benefit your business, visit www.people1st.co.uk/apprenticeships