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Award-winning apprentice encourages future plumbers to earn while they learn for Apprenticeship Week Wales

Getting paid to learn, the prospect of a secure job and not graduating with a large debt are just three of the reasons which led James McCall-Smith to an apprenticeship in plumbing.

Award-winning apprentice James is joining forces with [WaterSafe](#), the UK register of approved plumbers, to promote Modern Apprenticeships during [Apprenticeship Wales 2019](#) from March 4 to 8.

James says: *“I’m in my fourth and final year of my apprenticeship, which I’m spending on the tools with my employer Derek Scott Plumbing & Heating. The first three years were a combination of college study and work-based training – the mix works well and kept me engaged and motivated – although I prefer tools to textbooks!*

“Getting paid to learn is a huge plus for me – you don’t finish your training with a large debt. A good employer will look after you and often give you a job at the end of your apprenticeship. It gives you a sense of security.”

James says he loves the broad variety of work in plumbing but was never tempted by the fast-track courses: *“There’s no substitute for proper training and you won’t gain the right qualifications without it. What you learn on the job you won’t always find in a textbook.”*

James, who was crowned champion of the plumbing competition SkillPLUMB at WorldSkills UK Live last year, is completing his apprenticeship with a WaterSafe-approved business.

He says: *“Having WaterSafe approval reassures your customers – after all, people’s health can be at stake so it’s important to be fully qualified and registered.”*

WaterSafe advises future plumbers in Wales to avoid fast-track courses and work towards the nationally recognised level 3 qualification in plumbing and heating.

Regulator [Qualifications Wales](#) is working with the industry to develop exciting new qualifications, which will meet the demands of both employees and apprentices.

By choosing an apprenticeship with a recognised training provider, future plumbers will:

- combine practical hands-on experience with their studies
- receive a regular salary with a contract of employment and holiday leave
- steer clear of rogue trainers and fast-track courses
- gain industry-approved qualifications.



And James' advice for young people considering an apprenticeship in plumbing? *“Get your CV out there and don't be afraid to approach people directly – be proactive and enthusiastic, take the initiative. I did lots of research online and got to know all about the local companies.”*

To find out more about training to be a plumber and for the qualifications you need to become WaterSafe approved visit watersafe.org.uk/becomeaplumber.

For information on apprenticeships in Wales visit www.careerswales.com.

Notes for Editors

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WaterSafe: WaterSafe is a central register supported by all UK water companies and the seven Approved Contractors' Schemes in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Plumbers approved on the national WaterSafe register all have specific training in the Water Fittings (Supply) Regulations designed to maintain the high quality of water and avoid the risk of contamination.