

Laura Cunningham

A year in the life of an Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Ambassador

Oxfordshire Apprenticeships (OA) introduced a formal Apprenticeship Ambassador scheme in March 2015.

I was already supporting OA in an Apprenticeship Ambassador role, so they asked me to help them get ready to launch the scheme by advising on paperwork and plans for the first training & preparation day.

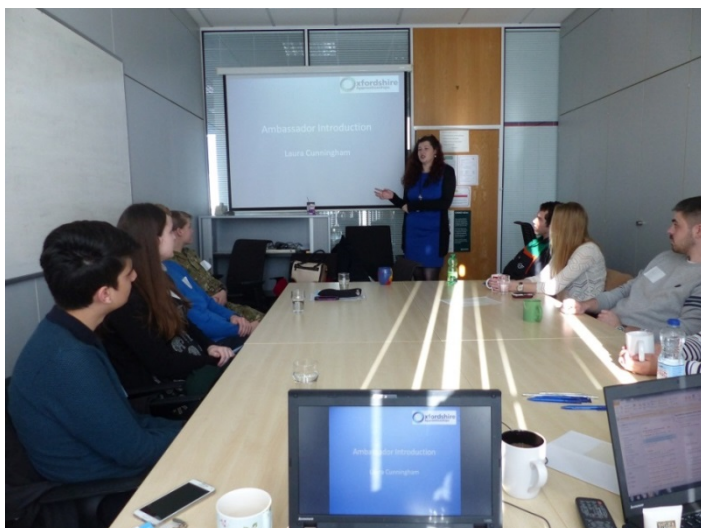
I took part in the day and became an official Ambassador with 9 others.



Becoming a mentor

OA arranged an away day for all the Ambassadors in July 2015 so that the different cohorts could meet each other and share ideas. The group really benefitted from the chance to meet other young people who are, or have been, Apprentices, so I decided to arrange an evening out to help bring us all together. We had a great time and I have since organised more social events, which really help us get to know each other and share experiences.

Oxfordshire Apprenticeships asked if I would become a mentor for the Ambassadors to offer them advice and support. I attended the other training and preparation days to talk about being an Ambassador. You can feel quite nervous about what you're letting yourself in for and I think that hearing what I'd been doing really helped to set their minds at rest.



This is me talking to the 3rd cohort of Apprenticeship Ambassadors at their training and preparation day in March 2016 about my experiences as an Ambassador.

Helping the voices of Apprentices be heard

One of the most important things I do as an Apprenticeship Ambassador is to make sure that the voices of Apprentices are heard.

In October 2015 I was asked to take part in a focus group as part of a bid for Oxford to become the European Capital of Innovation 2016. This was really important as winning would bring a significant amount of investment into the city. Oxford was shortlisted with 8 other cities as a result of the bid.



Shadowing Ian Hudspeth, Leader of Oxfordshire County Council

I work for Oxfordshire County Council, which has a job shadowing programme enabling you to request to shadow someone within the council to gain an insight into a different area of work. I decided to ask if I could shadow the Leader of the Council, Ian Hudspeth, which would give me the chance to talk to him about Apprenticeships and how they fit into his plans. I think it's really important that leaders hear from people who know what it's like to be an Apprentice. He agreed and I spent the day with him in January 2016. He enjoyed hearing all about my role as an Ambassador!



Meeting David Cameron, Prime Minister and MP for Witney

Oxfordshire Apprenticeships asked me to meet David Cameron at an Apprenticeships Open Morning in April 2015 to talk to him about what it's like to be an Apprentice and what I am doing to help raise awareness of the benefits of Apprenticeships in Oxfordshire. I think it's really important for him to hear from someone like me who knows what it's like to be an Apprentice.

I talked to him about the number of current vacancies in the county and how I am helping to promote them by visiting schools and attending events like the Open Morning to talk to young people and their parents and families about what it's like to be an Apprentice.



**Saturday
11 April**

**Apprenticeships Open Morning
West Witney Primary School
9am – 12.30pm**
Find out all about Apprenticeships!

See a Trade School Demo
10am & 11am
• See construction in action
• Get hands-on with bricks & mortar

Visit the ApprenticeSHOP
9am – 12.30pm
• We can answer all your
Apprenticeship questions!





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Sharing my experiences with school students



Probably my most important role as an Apprenticeship Ambassador is to give young people the opportunity to hear first-hand what it's like to be an Apprentice and to talk honestly and openly about the experience and ask any questions that might be worrying them. I have taken part in workshops with groups of students and given talks about my career.

This March I took part in a 'speed networking' event which gave students from a number of schools the opportunity to talk 1:1 to Apprentices and ask them honest questions to find out all about what it's like to be an Apprentice and ask us for top career tips! It was great for them to have the chance to talk to us about everything from finding an Apprenticeship to what your first day is like! 11 of us Ambassadors took part from all sorts of different roles.



Talking to young people and their parents and families

I supported Oxfordshire Apprenticeships at both the North and West Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Fairs, where students and their families from all the local schools are invited. I spoke to lots of parents at these events, who were really reassured by talking to me – someone who really knows what an Apprenticeship is like and what it could offer their child's career.



I have also helped OA at some of their 'ApprenticeSHOPS' - pop-up shops in different towns around the county. This involves talking to all sorts of people, from young people to grandparents and employers about Apprenticeships from an Apprentice point of view.



Reaching out through the media

As well as talking directly to people as often as possible, Oxfordshire Apprenticeships are keen to get the Apprenticeships message out through the local media. I featured in the Oxford Times in November 2015 in an article encouraging young people and their families to get in touch and chat to the Apprenticeship Ambassadors and ask us what it's like to be an Apprentice.



I was filmed for That's Oxford TV at the West Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Fair in October 2015, talking about the benefits of Apprenticeships for businesses as well as for young people and how my Apprenticeship has benefitted my career. See my interview at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4W4niesp3g>



In March 2016 I had the opportunity to attend some media training at the Skills Funding Agency in Reading with some of the other Ambassadors, which was to help us prepare for dealing with the media, which we might have to do in our role as Apprenticeship Ambassadors.



I've really enjoyed meeting the other Apprenticeship Ambassadors this year and getting to know them. This is us at our away day in July 2015 at Hill End Outdoor Education Centre!



It's been a really busy year and I've enjoyed getting involved in lots of activities and helping to spread the word about the benefits of Apprenticeships!

I'm really proud to be an Apprenticeship Ambassador and am looking forward to another great year!