

# Building skills from the ground up through Level 2 apprenticeships

Gallery is a specialist contractor delivering high-quality residential refurbishments, maintenance services, and commercial fit-outs across London. Founded in 2006, the company has built a reputation for exceptional craftsmanship, attention to detail, and a trusted in-house team of multi-skilled tradespeople. Working in high-end private residences requires a workforce that is adaptable, professional and technically excellent across multiple trades.



To build the talent it needs and ensure a strong future workforce, **Gallery currently employs two Level 2 Maintenance Operatives apprentices and one Level 2 Carpenter apprentice**, offering accessible, meaningful routes into a specialist and demanding sector.



## Why Gallery made it a Level 2

With demand for multi-trade skills increasing – and recruitment into such niche roles proving difficult – Gallery recognised that **the best way to develop the talent it needs is to grow it from within**. The company firmly believes that Level 2 apprenticeships are the right and necessary starting point. No school leaver arrives with the technical or site-readiness skills needed to work safely and effectively in high-end construction or maintenance. These skills can only be acquired through hands-on experience, guided learning and right support on-site.

**Level 3 would assume prior knowledge and experience that most young people simply do not have.** Level 2 allows apprentices to build foundational competence gradually, developing confidence, technical ability and professional behaviours before progressing to higher levels.

## Gallery identified several advantages of offering Level 2 apprenticeships

- **Breadth of experience across multiple trades**

Because the company delivers a wide range of refurbishment and maintenance services, apprentices can gain exposure to several trades before choosing their specialism, making Level 2 the **ideal starting point**.

- **Supporting long-term workforce planning**

Working in high-end private residences demands trusted, adaptable staff.

Apprenticeships enable Gallery to **develop young people in the company's standards and methods from day one**. Apprentices also form an important part of the company's succession planning, helping maintain a consistent, high-quality skill base as the business grows.

- **Embodies the organisation's culture of development**

Senior leadership strongly supports the programme, seeing apprenticeships as a **central part of how the organisation builds capability, nurtures talent and maintains its reputation for excellence**.

## Samantha Dixon, Apprenticeship Manager:

“For the type of work we deliver, it makes sense to build skills from the ground up. Level 2 gives young people the **foundation they need to grow into confident, capable tradespeople**.”

## Overcoming the challenges of offering Level 2 apprenticeships

Like many employers, Gallery has faced challenges when recruiting and supporting apprentices - but has developed practical solutions that enable young people to succeed.

- **Finding the right candidates**

Many young people have limited understanding of what working on a construction site involves, which can lead to higher turnover in entry-level roles. Gallery tackles this by offering **trial periods and hands-on experience** before an apprentice commits to a specific specialism.

- **Providing consistent on-site support**

Every apprentice is paired with an experienced tradesperson through **a buddying system**, ensuring daily guidance, support and real-world learning.

- **Peer-to-peer support**

As apprentices work across different sites, Gallery maintains a social media network to ensure they can stay connected, share experiences and **support one another**.

- **Making learning visible across the organisation**

Because the apprentices' development opportunities are highly visible, Gallery has reviewed training access across the wider workforce to ensure learning is available to all.



## The impact so far

Although Gallery has only been employing apprentices for a year, early signs are strong. They have already seen **improved retention compared to non-apprenticeship entry-level roles**, demonstrating the value of structured support, clear progression routes and an investment in young people from the outset.

## Gallery's Advice for other employers:

“Level 2 apprenticeships work because they **start with the basics**. You can't expect a young person to walk onto a construction site fully

formed. Give them time, variety and good mentoring – and they'll thrive."

### Gallery's experience highlights several key messages for employers:

- Start at Level 2 if you want young people to succeed in technical or multi-trade roles.
- Offer **broad exposure** early on so apprentices can discover what they enjoy and where they excel.
- Put **strong on-site support** in place, such as buddying or mentoring.
- Don't overlook **financial incentives** - these help make hiring apprentices cost-effective.
- Treat apprenticeships as an **investment**, not a shortcut to labour.

## Make it Level 2 – A call to action for employers

Gallery's approach shows that Level 2 apprenticeships are a powerful way to **widen entry routes into skilled work**, particularly in sectors where young people may have little prior experience.

### By making it Level 2, employers can:

- Open opportunities to a broader, more diverse pool of young people.
- Build essential foundational skills safely and effectively.
- Strengthen retention by supporting long-term career progression.
- Develop home-grown talent tailored to their business needs.

By making it Level 2, employers not only open doors for young people but also build a stronger, more reliable talent pipeline, creating the skilled workforce their business needs to thrive.

