

# Creating pathways into hospitality through Level 2 apprenticeships

Red Carnation Hotels is a family-run, award-winning luxury hotel group with 17 boutique properties worldwide, including six in central London.

Their apprenticeship pathway spans Levels 2-6, supporting young people to develop practical hospitality skills and progress towards supervisory and management roles.

## THE RED CARNATION HOTEL COLLECTION

Like many in the hospitality sector, Red Carnation Hotels faced recruitment challenges post-Covid. Ongoing **high vacancy levels** and the **need to bring new talent into frontline roles** has encouraged the group to increasingly look to apprenticeships as a way to build, grow and retain a skilled workforce.

## Why Red Carnation Hotels made it a Level 2

Hospitality offers clear, practical entry routes for young people. Food and beverage roles, in particular, lend themselves well to Level 2 apprenticeships because the skills needed can be developed quickly with structured training, supervision and hands-on learning.

Having already established a successful degree-apprenticeship programme, Red Carnation wanted to **broaden their entry pathways** and test whether Level 2 apprenticeships could help them attract and develop young people earlier in their careers.

## What they've tried – and what they've learned

Red Carnation were open about the challenges they face in offering Level 2 apprenticeships, and the opportunities they create for strengthening early-talent pathways:

- **Attracting young people into hospitality**

Hospitality is not always seen as a long-term career by young people unless they

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have family links to the sector. Many are unfamiliar with the realities of shift work, customer-facing roles and fast-paced service environments. Level 2 apprenticeships offer a structured and supported way in. Red Carnation have found that apprenticeships work best when young people first get the chance to experience the sector – for example through taster sessions or work experience – before committing to a qualification.

- **Managing fast-paced operational needs**

Hotels often need to recruit quickly, especially for roles like waiting staff, which can make the planning required for apprenticeships challenging. Red Carnation can see real potential in shorter, foundation apprenticeships as a way to bring in young people at the right moment, while still offering structured training and progression.

- **Building line manager confidence and readiness**

Some line managers feel underprepared to support very young apprentices or those from marginalised backgrounds. The business is increasingly focused on developing managers' skills and confidence through training, mentoring frameworks and clearer guidance – strengthening the culture of support around young apprentices.



- **4. Ensuring training-provider quality and continuity**

Red Carnation have experienced inconsistent training providers, including high turnover among apprenticeship coaches, which can be unsettling for younger learners. By reviewing their partnerships and expectations of providers, the organisation is working towards greater stability and higher quality support for future cohorts.

- **5. Awareness and perceptions of apprenticeships**

Some existing employees have been reluctant to convert their roles into apprenticeships, not always seeing hospitality as a long-term career pathway. Visible progression stories – such as Level 2 apprentices moving into management programmes and higher-level apprenticeships – are helping demonstrate the career potential apprenticeships can offer.

## Why this matters

Red Carnation Hotels' experience illustrates the real potential of Level 2 apprenticeships when employers invest in structured support, strong supervision and clear progression routes.

### Their journey shows:

- The need to shift perceptions among young people (and their parents) about hospitality careers.
- The importance of good line-manager practice, mentoring and training-provider support.
- How early experiences – even if some young people leave – can lead others to thrive, progress and build long-term careers.

For a sector facing labour shortages and rapid turnover, Red Carnation's experience reinforces why the *Make it an Apprenticeship* campaign matters: Level 2 apprenticeships can offer a powerful, practical first step into a career, and open up opportunities that young people may never have otherwise considered.

Red Carnation's commitment to revising and strengthening their offer shows that **Level 2 apprenticeships are not just viable in hospitality – they can be transformative when supported well.**

