

# Using customer service apprentice roles as a means of widening staff diversity in academic libraries

**Karen Stevens**

**Tarandeep Rai**

De Montfort University

Library & Student Services

Service Delivery Officers, Kimberlin Library





# Background to our apprenticeships

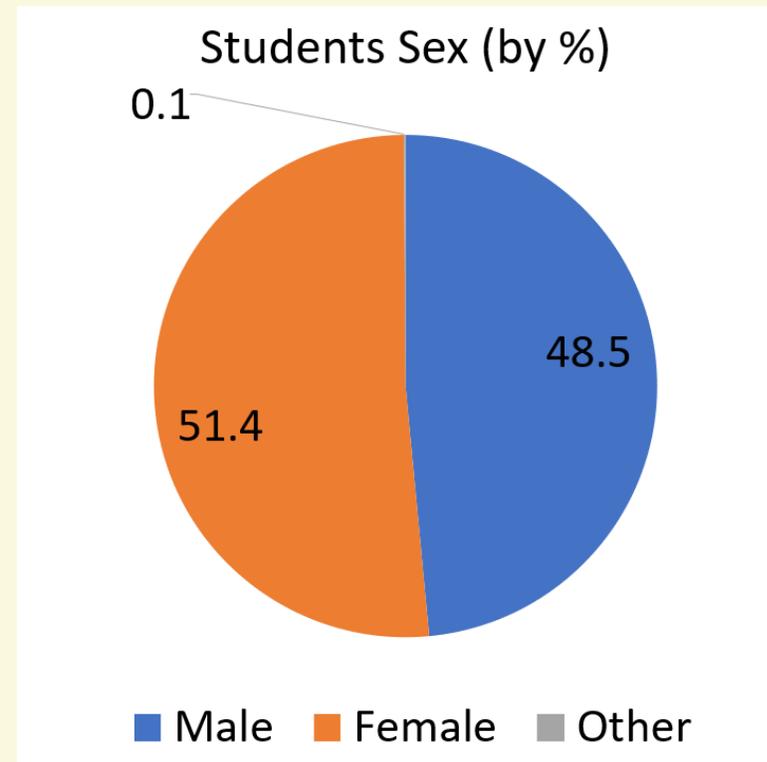
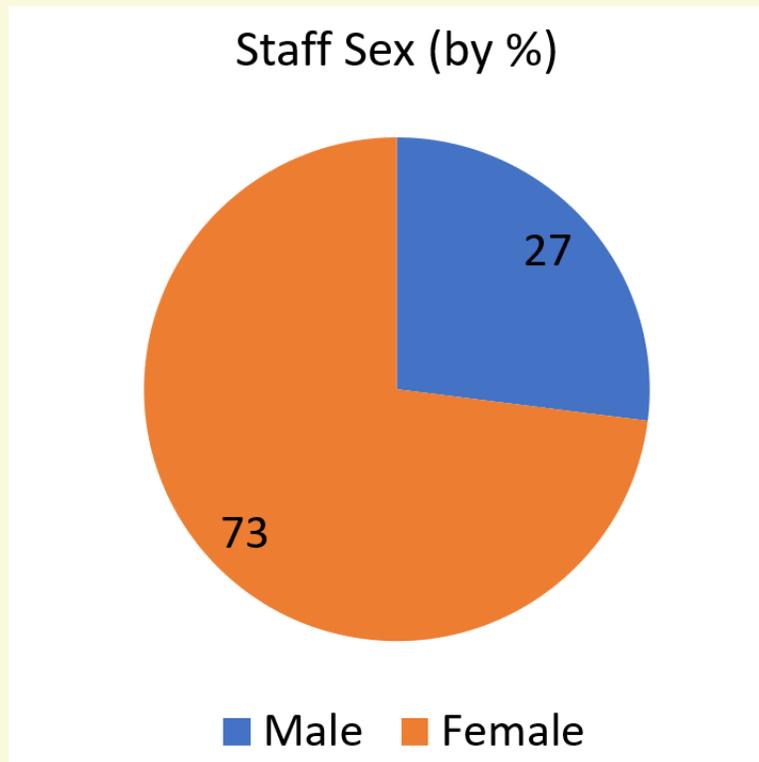
# Background

De Montfort University

- Staff
- Students

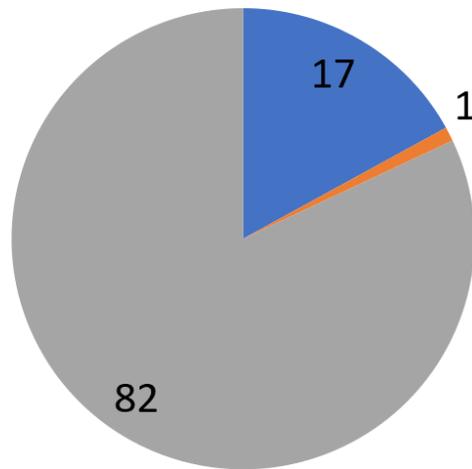


# Diversity: How our staff and students compare (as of 01/02/23)



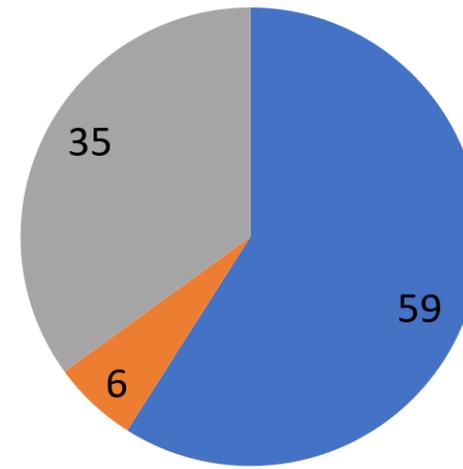
# Diversity: How our staff and students compare (as of 01/02/23)

Staff Ethnicity (by %)



■ BME ■ Not known / Prefer not to say ■ White

Student Ethnicity (by %)



■ BME ■ Not known / Prefer not to say ■ White

# How did we come to consider apprenticeships?

- Staff Interest
- National Apprenticeship Week sessions:  
Monday 6 – Friday 10 February 2023
- Perceived benefits

# Why this apprenticeship?

- Customer Service Practitioner
- Level 2 apprenticeship
- What is covered by this apprenticeship:
  - Focus on Customer Service – already have CSE accreditation
  - Focus on key areas from our existing job descriptions

# Why this apprenticeship?

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Knowledge</b>  | Knowing your customers<br>Understanding the organisation<br>Meeting Regulations and Legislation<br>Customer experience<br>Product and service knowledge              |
| <b>Skills</b>     | Interpersonal skills<br>Communication<br>Influencing skills<br>Personal organisation<br>Dealing with customer conflict and challenge                                 |
| <b>Behaviours</b> | Developing self<br>Being open to feedback<br>Team working<br>Equality – treating all customers as individuals<br>Presentation – dress code,<br>professional language |

# Learning Points

- Be brave – don't be afraid to go for something completely different
- Make discoveries – apprentices for staff were available at DMU
- Look at a problem differently



# Recruitment



## BE PART OF OUR GROWING SUCCESS

Apprentice Information Assistant  
Reference: D-62214151-02

This role is based in the library at De Montfort University – in the middle of our vibrant Leicester city-centre campus.

You may not have worked in a library before; however, this role is well suited to those who have great customer service skills, a willingness to learn new skills and enjoy interacting with a wide range of people. You will be helping our students access the information and support they need to make the most of their time at university, assisting with:

- resources for their studies
- IT queries
- referrals to colleagues for more in depth or specialist support
- their use of our learning spaces.

Daily, you'll be staffing our library service points and be the first person many new and regular students will meet. Don't worry though if you've not worked in a library before, you will receive full training in order to be able to provide proactive support for our customers who use the library facilities.

You will be required to complete a Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner Apprenticeship alongside the role. The role is 37 hours per week with one evening a week until 9pm and potentially weekend working from October 2023, on a fixed term basis for the duration of the apprenticeship.

### Ideal Candidate

You will have a passion for wanting to deliver exceptional customer service, enjoy working with young adults and have first-class conversation skills.

You will be proactive, self-motivated and well organised in order to learn new skills and complete a Level 2 Customer Service Practitioner Apprenticeship. You will also be a great communicator, bringing a strong rapport and a warm smile to this role!

As the successful candidate you will be an integral support to our diverse customers getting the most from their use of the library facilities and services; providing practical help and guidance in a friendly way, within our busy study spaces. Come and join our engaged and helpful team and support our busy and friendly library!

To apply:  
Please scan the QR code on the right hand side or click on the link below:  
<https://bit.ly/3ZsdbMS>

For any informal enquires about the role please contact Jane Mansfield (Senior Assistant Librarian) on [jmansfield@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:jmansfield@dmu.ac.uk) or by calling 0116 207 8376.



Faculty/Directorate:  
Library & Learning Services

Salary Info:  
Grade B  
£ 19,333 - £ 21,197

Contract Type:  
Fixed Term , Full-time

Advert Closing Date:  
21 March 2023

De Montfort University is committed to providing a working and learning environment that enriches lives, supports individuals to reach their full potential, and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. As an educator and shaper of society, the university aims to role model positive behaviours both within the university and to reflect the diversity of the wider community. As such we welcome applications from all potential candidates.



| Standard Recruitment   | Apprenticeship  |
|--|---|
| Create / review Job Description / Person Specification                 | Use but tweak - Cannot ask for prior experience   |
| Advertise on website   | Website, Gov apprenticeship website, local supermarkets, places of worship – no university / non-library  |
| Shortlisting – essentials / desirable                                  | Once trained.....   |
| Need right to work in UK   | 3 years in UK – no need for previous work<br>Skills / aptitude<br>English / Maths   |
| Panel  | Staff Apprenticeship Lead on panel  |
| Interviewing Information Assistant Role:<br>Shelving Test<br>Interview | Group discussion<br>Interview<br>IT test  |
| Choose preferred candidate(s)  | 3 appointable – calibre v. high<br>Manager contacted preferred candidates   |
| Tell HR  | Tell HR – do standard recruitment paperwork   |
| References checked   | References mainly school / college related – not telling us how they would perform e.g. this date to this date, one had limited previous work e.g. punctuality<br>Retail limited references |
| Provide feedback to candidates   | Provide feedback to un-appointable candidates   |
|  | Had to be approved by training provider – also needed to see references   |
| Candidate handed in notice   | Candidate handed in notice  |

# Learning Points

- Took a lot longer to recruit for apprentices – may be first time
- Don't be afraid to get a large pool of applicants – will get whittled down
- Time of year – recruited April e.g. school leavers



# Now what?

Managing new staff and progressing their apprenticeships

# Elements relating to an apprenticeship

| <b>Apprentices' Time</b>                         | <b>Work to be submitted</b>  | <b>People</b>                         | <b>Arrangements</b>  |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| For self-reflection                              | Skills scan – ongoing reflection   | Development Coach – Training Provider | Workplace Observations   |
| To write / submit work online – at desk          | End of Apprenticeship Assessment:  | Staff Apprenticeship Lead             | Off the job training with employer   |
| 6 hours a week off rota for off the job training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional Discussion</li> <li>- Portfolio</li> <li>- Observation</li> <li>- Apprentice Showcase</li> </ul> | Mentor                                | Progress Reviews every 3 months  |
|  |  | Line Manager                          | Interviews   |
|  |  |                                       | Reflection on potential opportunities / activities to make best use of apprentice experience |

# Training Providers

- Training providers listed for each type of apprenticeship e.g. customer service not boatbuilding. List available on government website:

<https://findapprenticeshiptraining.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/courses/122/providers?location=>

| Line Manager   | Mentor   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The line manager acts as a professional mentor, supporting and guiding the apprentice through the learning journey whilst supervising them in the workplace.</li> <li>• They set goals for the apprentice in the workplace, ensuring that they're linked to the successful completion of the apprenticeship.</li> <li>• The line manager discusses and implements an action plan with the apprentice and training provider to track progress, development and exposure to new skills</li> </ul> | <p>A mentor/coach is separate to a line manager and is someone who provides a support system for the apprentice. They can help your apprentice resolve issues quickly when they don't feel comfortable talking to their line manager.</p> <p>A workplace mentor may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• share their knowledge and experiences</li> <li>• provide advice, guidance and feedback</li> <li>• act as a sounding board for ideas and action plans</li> <li>• offer encouragement and support</li> <li>• celebrate the apprentice's success</li> <li>• identify development opportunities</li> <li>• build an apprentice's confidence, independence, and self-belief</li> <li>• set goals</li> <li>• support personal development and wellbeing</li> </ul> |

Taken from:

[HIT Line Manager Toolkit eGuide - Web.pdf\(hittraining.co.uk\)](https://www.hittraining.co.uk/Hit-Training-Toolkits/Line-Manager-Toolkit-eGuide-Web.pdf)

Taken from:

[Supporting your apprentice \(apprenticeships.gov.uk\)](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/supporting-your-apprentice)

# One Manager / Mentor or Two?

Consider:

- New to apprenticeships – helps to have a separate Line Manager and Mentor to offer each other support
- Gives Apprentices support from a wider range of staff
- Helps the Line Manager not to feel isolated / that they have to manage / find solutions / come up with ideas by themselves
- Helps prevent issues caused by personality clashes

# One Manager / Mentor or Two?

Separate Line Manager and Mentor roles work well for us,  
here in our library.

Combined Line Manager and Mentor roles, by one person,  
are in place elsewhere at DMU.

Consider how you're going to handle these two elements  
before advertising so you know who will be involved – online  
guidance available to help you decide.

# Learning Points

- New to managing this type of role – more time intensive first time round, new paperwork etc.
- Need to make contact with training provider and be proactive in getting clarity around arrangements



**What next?**

# What Next?

- Apprentices are here! - looking forward to them completing apprenticeships and becoming information assistants
- Making sure they get what they need from:
  - Line Manager
  - Mentor
  - Training Provider

# **Apprentices' views:**

**"Being able to learn on the job..."**

**"Qualification at the end of my training"**

**Passionate about customer service role  
and the possibility of learning new skills**

# **Apprentices' views:**

**"We [at DMU] are a multicultural environment"**

**Expand their knowledge**

# What Next?

- Range of apprenticeships to explore within LSS
- Potential training opportunities for other staff
- Peer support for managers / mentors / apprentices within DMU

# Qualification levels for apprenticeships



# Range of apprenticeships to explore within LSS:

Digital Learning Designer (Level 5)

Learning and Skills Mentor (Level 4)

Customer Service Specialist (Level 3)

# What Next?

- Range of apprenticeships to explore within LSS
- Potential training opportunities for other staff
- Peer support for managers / mentors / apprentices within DMU

# Potential training opportunities for other staff

Team Leader/Supervisor (Level 3)

Operations/Departmental Manager (Level 5)

Chartered Manager Degree (Level 6)

Senior Leader (Level 7)

# What Next?

- Range of apprenticeships to explore within LSS
- Potential training opportunities for other staff
- Peer support for managers / mentors / apprentices within DMU

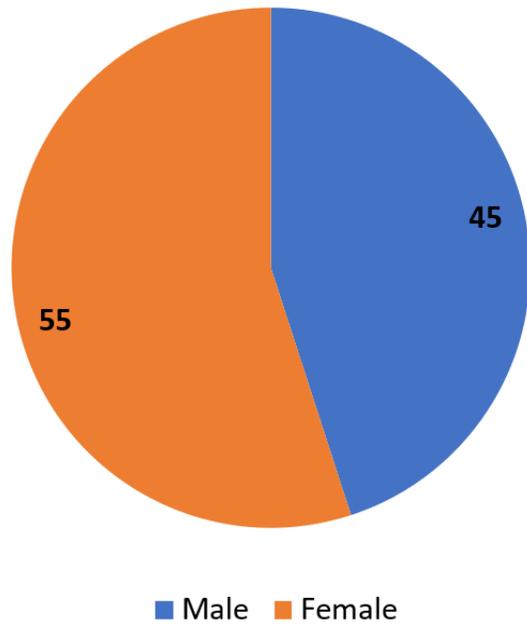
Did we succeed in increasing  
workforce diversity?

**Yes!**

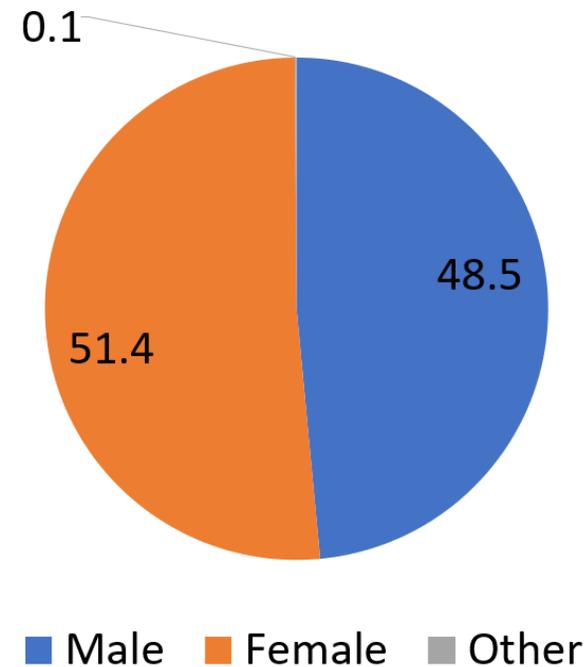
# Diversity: How our apprentice applicant pool and students compare

(as of 01/02/23)

Apprentice Applicants Sex (by %)



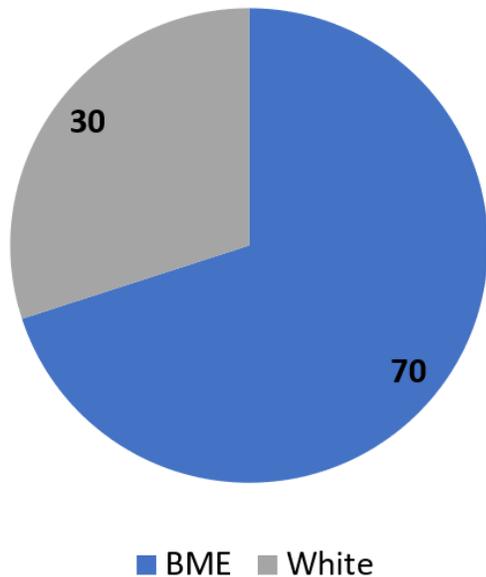
Students Sex (by %)



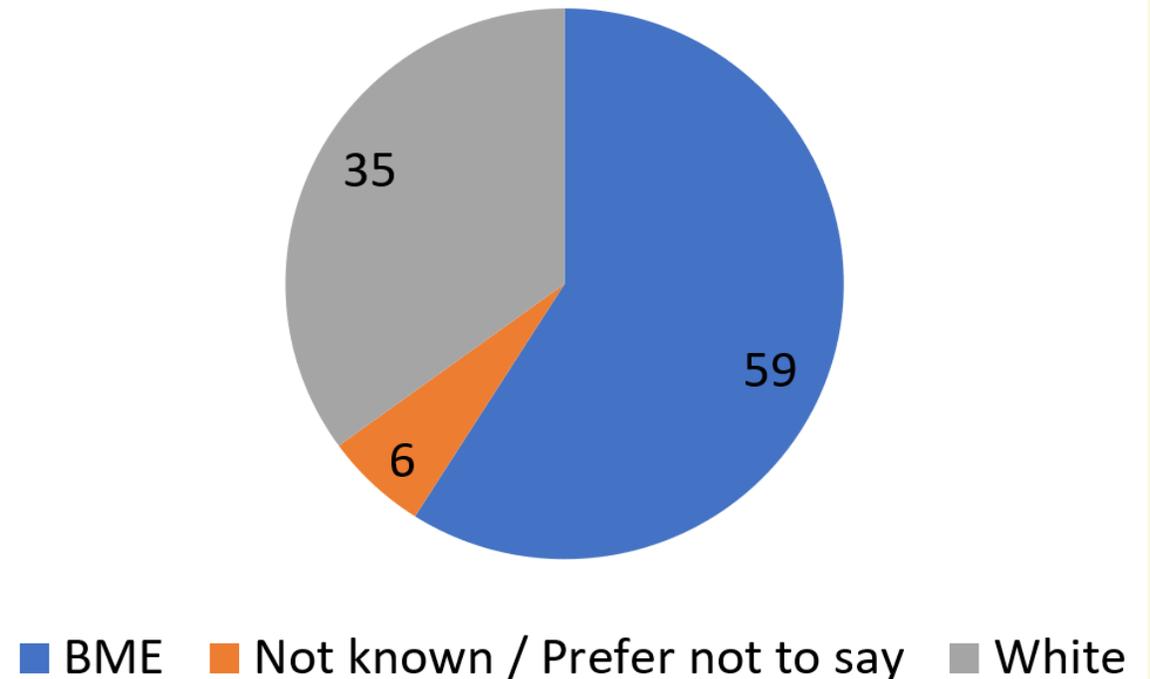
# Diversity: How our apprentice applicant pool and students compare

(as of 01/02/23)

Apprentice Applicants Ethnicity  
(by %)



Student Ethnicity (by %)



# Did we succeed in increasing workforce diversity?

- Both apprentices started early July 2023, so far so good
- Apprentices:
  - 2 new male members of staff
  - 1 is under 20
  - 1 from a BME background

# Was it a success?

- For the applicants / new starters
- For how we recruit going forward
- For our wider diversity of our staff
- For us as new managers at DMU

# For consideration / discussion

Do you always recruit using the same sources e.g. jobs.ac.uk, email mailing lists, university website?

What could be the impact of this on your potential pool of applicants?

Is this relevant for your library?

# For consideration / discussion

To what extent do you feel that the staff body within your library is a fair representation of your student body?

Is this important?

# Thank you for coming along today

**Karen Stevens**

**kstevens@dmu.ac.uk**

**Tarandeep Rai**

**tarandeep.raidmu.ac.uk**

"Apprentice" images AI generated from Pixlr.com

Vijay Patel Building photo ©De Montfort University

Microphone image ©Fill at pixabay.com

**Any Questions?**

