

Jake O'Keefe

Mark Wilkinson Furniture

Fine Furniture Making

Jake O'Keefe joined Mark Wilkinson Furniture three years ago and is due to finish his Apprenticeship later this year. He said: "I have always had an interest in design and technology and knew that when I left school that I wanted to work in the industry. I had gained the qualifications I needed to go on a full time course at college. When I saw the advertisement for the Apprenticeship with Mark Wilkinson Furniture it seemed a better route.

"I started off developing basic skills and slowly progressed through the factory learning about each of the processes involved in furniture making.

"The Apprenticeship programme at Mark Wilkinson enables you to learn a wide range of skills and find out what work suits you best."

"I attend college once a week which involves a mix of practical project work and theory. It's a really comprehensive course so by the end of the Apprenticeship, with on the job training I will have gained a wide range of experience.

"I am a really 'hands on' person and so the opportunity to learn whilst working really appealed to me. This has definitely been the element that I enjoyed most about the course as I am learning and practicing new skills every day. I am due to finish my Apprenticeship soon and on completion I hope to continue my career at Mark Wilkinson Furniture."



Andy McCarron

Production director

Mark Wilkinson Furniture

Andy said: "Mark Wilkinson Furniture has been employing apprentices for the last 10 years and for us it is the ideal way of ensuring that we have a regular flow of well trained people coming into the business.

"We see our apprentices as an investment, over the last 10 years we have employed 37 apprentices and 23 of those are still working for us. Many have become project managers; in fact our current factory manager began as an apprentice.

"We specialise in creating bespoke, unique furniture and so it is essential that our team of craftsmen are trained to an extremely high standard."

"The theoretical training at Trowbridge College dovetails extremely well with our on site training. We have a really good relationship with the College and work closely with the team of assessors to track the progress of our apprentices. The Apprenticeship helps to fill this skills gap and we want to encourage more young people to get involved.

"Jake has done exceptionally well on his Apprenticeship. He has worked his way up and is now so skilled that he is working in the furniture-making department, which is the most complex area of our work. We are delighted with his progress and we are now looking forward to the next generation of apprentices."

