

## Citation

### Pro-Chancellor

Since graduating from Bournemouth University in 2002, Christopher Ashton has forged a successful career in banking while volunteering to champion diversity and inclusion. Today he is Chief Commercial Officer of an organisation set up to protect people's access to cash, a Trustee of Bourne Free Pride Festival and Co-Chair of AFC Bournemouth's Fan Advisory Board.

Chris studied business and hospitality at BU and credits his time at university as being pivotal in shaping who he is today. As well as preparing him for his future career, it was here that he found a safe space to come out as gay. He recalls the strong support network he found amongst his friends, many of whom remain close to this day.

Following graduation, Chris joined a graduate scheme with NatWest and quickly rose through the ranks; from becoming the youngest branch manager in Dorset at the age of 23, to becoming a Regional Director with responsibility for 250 branches. He reflects that the motivation behind his early ambition was, in part, the result of family tragedy after his brother died in a car accident at the age of 40.

As Chris's career developed, he pursued his passion for diversity through volunteering; first as a Trustee and then Chair of Bournemouth's pride festival, Bourne Free. As a lifelong football fan, he also helped launch AFC Bournemouth's LGBTQ+ supporters' group, The Proud Cherries, and joined its Equality Focus Group. Earlier this year his campaigning work was recognised with a nomination in the Lifetime Achiever Award category at the National Diversity Awards.

Chris's latest career move has enabled him to align his professional and personal interests by joining an organisation with a societal impact. As Chief Commercial Officer of LINK he is helping to protect access to cash in local communities by managing a network of ATMs and banking hubs. The organisation seeks to support the most vulnerable in society who are still dependent on cash, at a time when banks are closing, and digital payments are on the rise.

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Chris Ashton and I ask you to confer upon him an Honorary Doctorate of Business Administration.