

# Watertrain Limited

Monitoring visit report

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**Inspection date(s):** 18–19 April 2018

**Type of provider:** Independent learning provider

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# Monitoring visit: main findings

## Context and focus of visit

This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of a series of monitoring visits to a sample of new apprenticeship training providers that are funded through the apprenticeship levy. The focus of these visits is on the three themes set out below.

Watertrain was formed in 2007 as part of a larger training organisation. The managing director established Watertrain Limited in 2010 as a stand-alone training provider, in partnership with a further education college. In 2013, the managing director and operations director bought out the college. In July 2017, they started training apprentices funded through the apprenticeship levy for a large water company. Watertrain currently provides training for 192 apprentices. All learners are studying at level 3. More than three quarters are on water process technician standards apprenticeships and the rest are enrolled on apprenticeship frameworks for the water industry. The provider works with four employers, based in Yorkshire, Northumbria, the South East and Portsmouth.

## Themes

### How much progress have leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of successful apprenticeship provision?

### Insufficient progress

Directors have not focused sufficiently on how well the apprenticeship programme ensures that all apprentices benefit from worthwhile training. Consequently, a significant minority of apprentices, particularly those who have been working in the water industry for many years, do not develop substantial new skills and knowledge.

Directors and managers do not have sufficient oversight of apprentices' progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge. They do not monitor closely enough the impact of their actions to rectify the weaknesses they have identified in the delivery of their apprenticeship programmes. For example, managers identified the need to improve target setting against apprentices' starting points. During the visit, managers and inspectors found that the vast majority of target setting was still weak. Directors and managers have not ensured that tutors and assessors use the information they collect about employees' prior skills and experiences and any gaps in their knowledge and skills effectively to plan their programmes individually. Consequently, apprentices do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do and the progress they are making.

Directors and managers of Watertrain do not ensure that the employers they work with understand fully the requirements of a successful apprenticeship programme. For too many employees, the employer is using the apprenticeship programme to enable employees to gain qualifications in existing skills and knowledge. A minority

of apprentices reported that they do not want to be an apprentice and do not see how they are gaining anything from the programme.

Directors have recognised the need to build the capacity of their workforce to strengthen the quality of the apprenticeship provision. They have made recent appointments of quality coordinators and full-time specialist tutors rather than relying on associate tutors. For example, one group of apprentices have had three different tutors for their functional skills sessions. Consequently, too many apprentices are not making sufficient progress for the length of time they have been on their programme.

Directors and managers have put in place plans for apprentices to undertake sufficient off-the-job training to meet the apprenticeship requirements. The majority of current apprentices have not received enough off-the-job training, because employers cancelled training sessions due to emergency business needs. As a result, too many apprentices are behind in their learning.

Governance is not yet effective. The managing director and operations director do not provide enough challenge about the standard of apprentices' training. They have not focused sufficiently on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The managing director and operations director plan to formalise Watertrain's governance arrangements, following the appointment of the current quality assurance and operations managers as directors, at the next senior management meeting.

Directors have focused on working closely with employers to develop a comprehensive training programme to meet the five pathways for the water industry apprenticeship standards. They have established effective working relationships with employers. The content of the training programme and the model of delivery have been developed in collaboration with employers to meet the specific skills needed for this highly regulated industry. The comprehensive portfolios for each of the five water industry pathways that they deliver support apprentices to meet the knowledge elements of the apprenticeship standards.

**What progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that apprentices benefit from high-quality training that leads to positive outcomes for apprentices?      Insufficient progress**

Tutors and assessors do not routinely use apprentices' existing skills and knowledge to plan learning. The majority of apprentices are not set work or tasks at the right level of difficulty, and most tutors and assessors do not set clear and stretching targets. For example, assessors set targets for apprentices such as 'attend the training sessions and complete knowledge questions'. Consequently, too many apprentices, especially the more experienced employees, are not challenged enough to extend their knowledge and do not make good progress.

A significant minority of the most experienced apprentices do not develop substantial new knowledge, because tutors in lessons fail to check often enough whether they already have a sufficient depth of understanding of topics. The most recently employed apprentices, approximately two thirds of the cohort, gain new skills and

understanding. For example, apprentices undertaking the wastewater pathway improve their understanding of sewage treatment processes to remove waste contaminants.

Tutors and assessors fail to provide sufficient or effective feedback to apprentices to help them to improve, including to improve their use of English. They focus on the minimum standards that apprentices need for their qualifications. Consequently, apprentices do not develop the industry and English skills they are capable of in order to become even more effective employees.

Managers have not developed successfully enough the arrangements to evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and assessment practices. Managers' observations of the quality of sessions focus too much on what the tutors and assessors do rather than the impact of teaching practices on apprentices' skills development and progress.

Tutors and assessors have not ensured that apprentices develop a good understanding of British values. Apprentices do not increase their understanding of life in modern Britain.

Tutors and assessors have a good understanding of, and expertise in, the water industry. They use their knowledge and experience well, for example to explain and discuss the working of different equipment in sewage treatment plant processes, such as settlement tanks.

Teachers and assessors provide good opportunities for the majority of apprentices to develop their mathematical skills. Employers comment positively on the benefits of the mathematics module in enabling apprentices to assess chlorine dosages, for example, accurately.

### **How much progress have leaders and managers made in ensuring that effective safeguarding arrangements are in place? Reasonable progress**

Directors have implemented safeguarding policies and procedures that include clear guidance to staff on how to report concerns. The designated safeguarding officers deal effectively and promptly with safeguarding concerns and ensure that appropriate records are completed and maintained. Directors and managers have recently provided staff with contact details of key agencies for all the regions in which apprentices are located. Health and safety is a key priority in this highly regulated industry.

The 'Prevent' duty risk assessment and action plan are in place. Tutors and assessors have received training in safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty and understand their responsibilities but they are not yet confident in exploring relevant issues with apprentices. Consequently, apprentices do not fully understand how safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation and extremism impact on their lives and at work.

Directors have established three appropriately trained designated safeguarding officers, one of whom is the managing director. Directors put in place safer

recruitment practices when employing staff. Apprentices feel safe and inspectors did not observe any apprentices that were at immediate risk.

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