

Inspection of Northern Powergrid (Yorkshire) Plc

Inspection dates:

28 June to 1 July 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

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| The quality of education | Outstanding |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Apprenticeships | Outstanding |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this provider

Northern Powergrid is an employer provider. It delivers apprenticeships to staff who work on power networks across Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire and the north east of England. At the time of the inspection, there were 101 apprentices in training, of whom 59 were studying the level 3 power network craftsperson standard and 42 were studying the level 4 electrical power networks engineer standard. A further 123 apprentices have recently completed their training and are preparing for their final assessment.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Apprentices enjoy their learning and demonstrate exceptional commitment to all aspects of their programme. Leaders and managers have very high expectations for all their staff, and apprentices respond to these expectations extremely well. Attendance at sessions is very high, and apprentices are punctual for all planned training activities. Apprentices consistently demonstrate high levels of respect for their peers and workplace colleagues.

Apprentices practise their skills by using resources that are of a very high standard. The tools and equipment that apprentices use at the training centres are exactly the same as those that they will use in the workplace. For example, apprentices work on power units that are found in substations before they go out on site. Leaders also invest in cables and equipment that are out of date and no longer installed as apprentices need to know how to repair cables that are now obsolete.

Apprentices benefit from valuable opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours that they will need in their future careers. During recent storms, apprentices provided critical front-line assistance by staffing community support vehicles. Apprentices developed their knowledge of emergency response and practised their customer service skills, which they will need to use as experienced engineers in emergency situations.

Apprentices are proud to work for the organisation and are keen to share their experiences with and support others in the community. They take part in industry awareness days at local schools, universities and military bases to raise awareness of employment opportunities, and they volunteer to help with the distribution of food parcels to vulnerable people.

Apprentices feel safe and know how to look after themselves and others in the workplace, the training centre and in society. Staff support apprentices very effectively to learn how to stay safe in the high-risk power industry and how to identify potential signs of extremist behaviour or terrorist activities. For example, apprentices working near oil refineries receive specific briefings on the risks of targeted terrorist attacks.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have a very well-defined strategy for their apprenticeship provision. They focus specifically on providing two specialist programmes that are designed to create a skilled, sustainable and resilient workforce. They recruit apprentices with integrity to permanent roles within the organisation.

Leaders work very well with operational managers from across the organisation and with subcontractors to design a highly effective curriculum that meets the changing needs of the sector. They hold frequent meetings and forums to evaluate and plan the curriculum for apprentices. Leaders have enhanced the curriculum to include the

additional demands on domestic energy supplies resulting from electric vehicle charging points and specific training on working in confined spaces.

Managers plan a highly ambitious curriculum that includes the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours that go beyond the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. Apprentices benefit from an extensive range of additional training and experiences that are designed to help them to become well-rounded engineers and employees. For example, they learn how to drive off-road vehicles carefully and how to check that other contractors have prepared holes in the ground safely.

Managers and staff carry out rigorous assessments to identify what apprentices know and can do at the start of their programme. They check apprentices' existing knowledge as well as how competently apprentices can carry out tasks, such as climbing overhead line poles and cable jointing. Managers use the information that they have about apprentices very well to plan the most suitable training for them and to identify any additional support that they may need.

Managers and staff plan and sequence the curriculum very well. They plan short blocks of teaching, so that apprentices learn underpinning principles before they go out on site to apply their knowledge and practise their skills under supervision. As a result, apprentices develop quickly new technical knowledge and skills. Apprentices on the level 3 power network craftsperson standard learn how to check specifications with a wide range of measurements, tolerances and written instructions before they use them in the workplace.

Teaching staff use assessment very effectively to check what apprentices know and can do. They use quizzes, group tasks and practice examinations skilfully to identify what apprentices are good at and the areas in which apprentices need more teaching. This enables staff to plan additional coverage, where needed, of topics such as materials resistance, and arrange for apprentices to join different workplace teams to practise their cable jointing. As a result, apprentices know more, remember more and produce work of a very high standard.

Managers and staff prepare apprentices very well to work as highly skilled engineers. Apprentices learn the importance of quality and know what they must do to meet the exacting industrial standards of the power industry. For example, they understand that replacing sleeves in the wrong order or without using the right tool could result in electricity breeches or expensive restorative works.

Apprentices benefit from highly effective information and guidance about career opportunities within the organisation. They have a good understanding of what they need to do in order to pursue the wide range of opportunities that are available to them when they have completed their apprenticeship. For example, apprentices on the level 3 power network craftsperson standard know that they can complete additional training for management roles in the future.

Leaders and managers make suitable arrangements for apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics. They work well with Tyne Coast College to complete initial and diagnostic assessment to inform their programme of study. Almost all of the very small number of apprentices who need to achieve functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics do so in a timely way.

Managers implement a well-considered programme of training and updates to support apprentices to stay physically and mentally healthy. Apprentices receive useful information about company support services at their induction and learn about the importance of back care and physical fitness during their training. Leaders circulate a frequent 'well-being Wednesday' email with clear and helpful tips on topics, such as alcohol awareness, drinking plenty of water and morning routines to support positive mental health.

Leaders recruit staff who are well qualified and who have very high levels of relevant industry experience. Leaders require staff to complete frequent industrial updating to maintain the currency of their expertise. All instructors complete the same update training as operational staff and carry out additional training in areas, such as streetworks, distributed generation and controlling workplace hazards.

Leaders, managers and those responsible for governance are committed to the success of apprentices. They have very high expectations of apprentices and support them well to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to be successful in the future. Leaders know what they do well, and have an unrelenting focus on continuous improvement and a clear emphasis on delivering a very high standard of training to apprentices.

Leaders and managers implement effective reporting and meeting structures to give them suitable oversight of the apprenticeship programmes that they provide. They have recently introduced a new workforce resilience group, an apprenticeship governance group and a safeguarding group to broaden their scrutiny of the provision. As a result, those responsible for governance receive reliable assurance that statutory duties are being met.

Leaders and managers use their knowledge and expertise very well to assess comprehensively the risks that apprentices might face. They plan carefully to mitigate risks and to create a safe working environment. For example, managers work well with other agencies to build intelligence about drug farms and county lines activity, and plan accordingly for the completion of jobs in areas where these risks are prevalent.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders implement effective and well-communicated policies to create a strong safeguarding culture. They make their expectations clear to all staff, provide useful training and updates, and create straightforward mechanisms for reporting concerns. Apprentices are well aware of organisational safeguarding practices.

Leaders appoint highly appropriate staff to take the lead on safeguarding and compliance with the requirements of the 'Prevent' duty. Staff in these designated roles put their knowledge and expertise to very good use to assess thoroughly the risks that apprentices might face and implement effective plans to mitigate the risks.

Provider details

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|------------------------------------|--|
| Unique reference number | 2495222 |
| Address | Kepier Training Centre Kepier Farm Durham DH1 1LB |
| Contact number | 0191 3877931 |
| Website | www.northernpowergrid.com |
| Principal/CEO | Gareth Pearson |
| Provider type | Employer |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Main subcontractors | Tyne Coast College EA Technology |

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the training and standards manager, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Andrea Shepherd, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Ian Frear | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Sarah Seaman | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Andrew Scanlan | Ofsted Inspector |

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