

# United Utilities Water Limited

Employer Provider

**Inspection dates**

1–3 August 2018

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>		<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>	Apprenticeships <b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>	
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Good</b>	
Outcomes for learners	<b>Good</b>	
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection		Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings

### This is a good provider

- Leaders' and managers' commitment to providing high-quality apprenticeship programmes to meet the recruitment and skills needs of United Utilities Water Limited (UW) is unwavering.
- Leaders and managers have made a significant investment in the training facilities located on an active wastewater-treatment plant. These provide apprentices with exceptional facilities and resources that prepare them for a career in the water- and wastewater-treatment industry.
- Almost all apprentices complete their apprenticeship by the planned end date and gain employment.
- Tutors use their extensive knowledge and expertise of the water- and wastewater-treatment industry to train apprentices to meet the high standards expected by UW.
- Apprentices participate in a wide range of voluntary work and charitable activities, and their performance as ambassadors in promoting apprenticeships to schoolchildren is good.
- Most apprentices make good progress and develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours that are highly relevant to their job.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism with a particularly strong appreciation of the potential risks in the water- and wastewater-treatment industry.
- Mentors are highly effective in aligning theory taught in the training centre to apprentices' practical experiences in the workplace.
- Leaders and managers do not ensure that there is effective oversight of the apprenticeship provision by an impartial supervisory body.
- Leaders, managers and tutors do not ensure that the most able apprentices are challenged to produce work of a very high standard and achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Tutors do not provide sufficient careers information, advice and guidance to apprentices throughout their programme.
- Leaders and managers do not have a formal strategy to improve apprentices' English and mathematical knowledge and skills throughout the apprenticeship.

## Full report

### Information about the provider

- United Utilities Water Limited (UUW) is the United Kingdom's largest listed water company. The company owns and manages the regulated water and wastewater network in the north west of England. Approximately 5,500 staff manage a network of reservoirs, treatment works, pumping stations, water pipes and sewers to ensure that water is always available. The company takes water away from 3.2 million homes and 200,000 businesses. The company's headquarters are in Warrington, Cheshire and its technical training centre is based in Radcliffe, Greater Manchester.
- Currently 117 apprentices are employed across the company's water and wastewater operations. All apprentices are employed. One hundred and four apprentices are working towards the new apprenticeship standards while 13 are completing apprenticeship frameworks. The large majority of apprentices are studying apprenticeships in water and wastewater treatment and water and wastewater networks. Most of the remaining apprentices complete apprenticeships in mechanical, electrical and instrumentation and control and automation engineering.

### What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Leaders and managers should ensure that there is effective oversight of the quality of the apprenticeship provision by an impartial supervisory body that:
  - holds senior managers of the apprenticeship division to account to improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
  - records the support and challenge that managers receive, clearly documenting any actions and monitoring meticulously their progress in achieving these actions.
- Leaders and managers should ensure that there is an appropriate strategy to improve apprentices' knowledge and skills in English and mathematics to ensure that they can function effectively in the workplace and in their personal lives.
- Managers and tutors should ensure that apprentices' existing knowledge, skills and experiences are identified clearly at the start of the programme. They should use this information to plan and monitor learning that challenges apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours and obtain the grades of which they are capable.
- Tutors should provide apprentices with ongoing careers information, advice and guidance to identify the potential opportunities available to them when they complete their apprenticeship and beyond.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Leaders and managers have high aspirations and expectations of staff and apprentices. They have an ambitious vision to be the premier provider of water and wastewater apprenticeships. They require apprentices to be business-ready by the end of the apprenticeship and stress the importance of recruiting high-calibre apprentices to undertake key roles in UUW. Leaders are fully committed to recruiting apprentices to meet the skills requirements of the business and half of all new recruits are apprentices.
- Leaders have made a significant investment in developing a training centre that has an extensive range of facilities to support the development of apprentices' knowledge, skills and behaviours. The training centre is situated on a live wastewater-treatment plant, which allows training to be contextualised very successfully and apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours in a realistic working environment.
- Curriculum planning is effective. Apprenticeship managers have nurtured very effective relationships with senior managers in different divisions to ensure that the curriculums reflect their knowledge, skills and behavioural requirements. Working-group meetings are regular and they inform the curricular content for the next academic year. These effective relationships result in apprentices developing highly relevant knowledge and skills in the training centre, aligned with carefully coordinated on-the-job training supported by experienced mentors. Consequently, apprentices can link theory to practice quickly and make an effective contribution to UUW's business objectives.
- Performance management is effective. Managers have regular one-to-one meetings with tutors and support staff. They discuss a range of relevant performance indicators which include curricular development, apprentices' progress and the findings from observations of teaching, learning and assessment. These meetings are very effective in ensuring that tutors have a thorough understanding of the high standards that leaders expect and for managers to provide support to tutors when they need it. Managers identify good practice skilfully and share ideas with the wider team on how to improve the training that apprentices receive.
- Ongoing professional development for tutors is good. Tutors enhance their extensive existing industrial knowledge and skills. They have close links with their specialist areas within UUW to ensure that they are providing apprentices with up-to-date knowledge and skills that the business needs. Tutors return to industry regularly to shadow operational colleagues to ensure that they are up to date with operational procedures and technical specifications. This initiative is also of considerable benefit to all apprentices.
- Self-assessment is accurate. Managers evaluate the quality of the provision accurately. They produce a succinct self-assessment report. They identify the areas for improvement precisely and monitor these meticulously through a range of improvement plans which have resulted in gradual improvements in the provision over several years.
- Leaders and managers do not have a clear understanding of apprentices' progress and the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they develop. This is because tutors do not identify apprentices' knowledge, skills and experiences when they start an apprenticeship. Tutors place too much emphasis on reporting module completion as opposed to the new knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices acquire.

## The governance of the provider

- Governance of the apprenticeship division is not sufficiently rigorous. While steering group meetings take place regularly and are attended by UUW's senior managers, there are no papers or accompanying minutes. Consequently, there are no records of what has been discussed or what actions have been set to improve the provision further.
- Leaders and managers do not make sure that the chair of the steering group is sufficiently impartial. The current structure of the group does not ensure that there is enough external challenge to senior leaders and managers of the apprenticeship division to make sure that the provision continues to improve.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers have recruited two designated safeguarding officers who have received training at an appropriate level. They fulfil their role effectively. All staff and apprentices receive regular training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty. This training has resulted in apprentices feeling safe in their surroundings. Apprentices have a good appreciation of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism, which are particularly pertinent to the water industry.
- Leaders and managers have developed an appropriate safeguarding policy and appropriate procedures. Staff understand these fully and use them correctly to support and protect young apprentices. Leaders and managers have developed good relationships with a range of external agencies around the north west of England to support them should they need any advice or support in relation to safeguarding.
- Leaders and managers ensure that apprentices' safety in the workplace is of the highest priority. All apprentices have extensive initial and ongoing training on working safely at the training centre and at the different operational sites within the business. Apprentices acknowledge accurately that this is a key strength in their training programme due to the high-risk environments in which they train and work.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Tutors use their extensive industrial knowledge and experience of working in water- and wastewater-treatment to teach apprentices how scientific principles are used in the design, operation and maintenance of water-treatment sites at UUW. Apprentices can apply competently their knowledge and understanding of what they learn to the operation of machinery and equipment. For example, tutors encourage apprentices to apply their knowledge to solve technical issues such as identifying that pipe corrosion is a result of the chemical interaction between hydrosulphite and water.
- Apprentices gain new knowledge and skills from the practical tasks they undertake using an exceptional range of equipment, machinery and computer-based training resources. They learn swiftly how to calibrate flowmeters and write codes for programmable controllers. Many apprentices use the extensive range of high-quality computer-based resources to deepen or extend their understanding, such as learning about sedimentation and filtration processes in the training centre.

- Apprentices' visits to different water- and wastewater-treatment plants help them to become more familiar with a wider range of processes and equipment that they will encounter in the sites where they work. As a result, they develop a better insight into the complexities of the range of machinery they will operate and maintain after completing their programme.
- Tutors check regularly apprentices' understanding of the topics taught. They adjust their teaching methods appropriately to aid knowledge and skills development. They use good demonstrations to help them explain unfamiliar concepts, such as odour classification in waste treatment, which have a significant positive effect on apprentices' learning.
- All apprentices have access to helpful and supportive mentors while working on sites. Mentors support apprentices to practise the knowledge and skills they have learned at the training centre and put into practice on site. Mentors help apprentices to become more competent with their technical knowledge and skills, for instance by overseeing apprentices changing pump seals and impellers or welding safety grids in settlement tanks.
- Most tutors use effective teaching methods to ensure that apprentices develop the mathematical knowledge and skills they require to function effectively on site and to meet the apprenticeship requirements. For example, they stress the importance of accurate measurement of depth of fluids and the manufacture of component parts to exact dimensions when they repair equipment. Conversely, tutors do not extend apprentices' use of English sufficiently. A few tutors do not identify errors in apprentices' assessed work, which include spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- Tutors do not collect and use sufficient information about apprentices' prior knowledge and experience at the start of the programme to challenge them to develop the knowledge and skills of which they are capable. Too often tutors set apprentices uninspiring learning objectives and mediocre development targets resulting in apprentices only meeting the minimum expectations of the apprenticeship and not producing work of a higher standard. For example, apprentices who have completed prior learning at college are given the same learning tasks as other apprentices who have not. They are not requested to complete more challenging work and to achieve higher grades.
- Too many tutors do not provide useful feedback on apprentices' work. When apprentices' work satisfies the assessment criteria, tutors do not provide them with specific feedback so that they can enhance their work and achieve a higher standard. However, when apprentices' work does not meet the required standard, they receive detailed feedback which they use to improve their work
- Tutors do not ensure, when they review apprentices' progress, that they evaluate clearly and precisely the knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices develop and what they need to do to improve. Too often tutors set cursory targets in progress reviews. They do not set specific actions that will assist apprentices to develop new knowledge and skills rapidly and assist them to achieve higher grades.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

- Apprentices are positive about their learning and demonstrate high levels of confidence at work and in the training centre. They display good oral communication skills such as

considering the viewpoints of others when discussing topics with colleagues and active listening. They develop good teamworking skills when working with other apprentices and colleagues. Apprentices are proud of the new knowledge, skills and behaviours they develop.

- Apprentices enjoy their learning. Most apprentices are positive about the further learning opportunities that are available. They equate their learning directly to improved job performance in the workplace. A few apprentices can identify how they make good use of the knowledge, skills and behaviours they acquire in the training centre and the workplace in their personal lives. For example, one learner developed good skills in data analysis, including the creation and interpretation of graphs, through his role in carrying out water-purity tests. He has further developed the skill and applies it to his personal fitness regime. He graphically represents time spent running to identify trends in performance and set realistic personal-fitness goals.
- Apprentices develop a good understanding of British values. They articulate clearly the importance of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance as vital ingredients of harmonious workplaces and the communities in which they live.
- Apprentices participate in a wide range of voluntary work and charitable activities. These include taking part in beach cleans in Morecambe and Blackpool, promoting midnight walks in aid of a local hospice and donating blood. Many perform very effectively as ambassadors, promoting UUW's apprenticeships to school pupils at careers fairs.
- Apprentices have a good understanding of safeguarding. They are particularly adept at explaining the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and the impact that any attacks on a water facility could have on the country. All apprentices adhere to stringent safe working practices. They understand the importance of using personal protective equipment correctly in accordance with site rules to keep themselves safe.
- Apprentices enhance further their existing knowledge and skills in mathematics through the inclusion of a mathematics and science module as part of their apprenticeship programme. The knowledge and skills they develop in these units are extremely pertinent to their job role and they are used readily in the training centre and on site.
- Apprentices do not receive sufficient careers information, advice and guidance throughout their programme. Most apprentices have an understanding of their immediate job role but few have extended career aspirations. They are not made aware of the other opportunities that are available in UUW.
- Too few apprentices are aware of UUW's extensive employee-assistance programme. The programme is open to all employees and it provides a good range of support services to assist employees in the workplace and in their personal lives.

## Outcomes for learners

**Good**

- Apprentice achievements in 2016/17 were high, with almost all apprentices achieving their apprenticeships by the planned end date. They were significantly above similar providers nationally. Managers have maintained this high performance in 2017/18, with almost all apprentices completing their apprenticeship successfully by the planned end date.

- Most apprentices are making the progress of which they are expected because of good teaching, learning and assessment. They develop substantial new knowledge, skills and behaviours which they use in the workplace for operational activities. Mentors play a pivotal role in preparing apprentices for the rigour of working life at U UW by nurturing the expected behaviours that leaders expect.
- Apprentices produce work of a good standard in the training centre and in the workplace. Apprentices use the knowledge, skills and behaviours they learn in the training centre quickly to complete operational activities in the business. For example, apprentices mount and wire up a dosing pump and complete a safe isolation process while another maps the code from a programme logic controller.
- Apprentices' progression is good. Almost all apprentices who complete their apprenticeship successfully stay at U UW, with around four fifths of these apprentices going on to study at higher levels, including higher national certificate, foundation degree and degree-level qualifications. Apprentices significantly improve their earning potential after completing their apprenticeship by as much as £14,000.
- A small minority of apprentices do not make the progress they are expected to make. Managers have identified the reason for this slow progress as being delayed assessment and have swiftly put additional support in place to help them to catch up.

## Provider details

Unique reference number	1244875
Type of provider	Employer provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	105
Apprenticeship Manager	Jacqui Kawczak
Telephone number	01925 537588
Website	<a href="https://www.unitedutilities.com">https://www.unitedutilities.com</a>

## Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	2	1	65	49				
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		–		–			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the quality assurance specialist, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of apprentices and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

## Inspection team

Paul Cocker, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shahram Safavi	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bob Busby	Ofsted Inspector

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