

Cadent Gas Limited

Monitoring visit report

Unique reference number: 2497152

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Inspection date(s): 17–18 July 2019

Type of provider: Employer

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Monitoring visit: main findings

Context and focus of visit

From October 2018, Ofsted undertook to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy. This monitoring visit was undertaken as part of those arrangements and as outlined in the 'Further education and skills inspection handbook', especially the sections entitled 'Providers newly directly funded to deliver apprenticeship training provision' and 'Monitoring visits'. The focus of these visits is on the themes set out below.

Cadent Gas Limited was established in 2017. It is the largest gas distribution network operator in the United Kingdom. It has training centres offering standards-based apprenticeships in the West Midlands, the North West, the East of England and North London. Apprentices are based across the four distribution zones. At the time of the monitoring visit, there were 76 apprentices, of which 72 were aged 19 and over. Most apprentices are on the gas networks craftsperson level 3 apprenticeship. Of these, 10 are following strands in electrical instrumentation, 17 in pressure control and storage, and 30 in emergency response. Nineteen are on gas team leader apprenticeships at level 2. The organisation subcontracts the teaching of BTEC units to Solihull College.

Themes

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

Significant progress

Senior leaders and managers have developed a high-quality and well-planned apprenticeship programme. It is central to the company's strategy to recruit and retain staff to meet the needs of the business. The programme addresses the skills shortages within the gas supply industry. As a result, managers are recruiting and training a competent workforce.

Leaders place a high priority on off-the-job training, which is of a very high standard. Apprentices spend around a third of their time training off-the-job. Managers ensure that the training is delivered in a logical order. The standard of training facilities is exceptional. Apprentices safely hone their skills in simulated work environments before they carry out live jobs. For example, they use compressed air instead of gas to practise for their assessments.

Leaders and managers ensure that all trainers are well qualified and expert in their field. Most trainers hold a formal teaching qualification. Training activities are of a

very high standard. Managers make good use of their observations of training practice to ensure that trainers improve their practice. As a result, apprentices benefit from high-quality training.

Senior leaders are always looking to improve the quality of the apprenticeship provision. Managers review the standard of assessment frequently. They provide apprentices with feedback on their progress and intervene swiftly if they are falling behind. As a result, apprentices produce work of a very high standard. Most apprentices make rapid progress.

Managers recruit apprentices with the minimum English and mathematical skills they need to enable them to achieve their apprenticeship. Trainers integrate mathematics very well in practical training, for example in helping apprentices to calculate pressure tolerances when checking gas meters. However, trainers do not develop apprentices' English writing skills sufficiently for future roles.

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

Apprentices are highly motivated, enthusiastic and enjoy their training. They develop highly technical skills, knowledge and behaviours to meet the requirements of the gas networks qualifications. They become highly effective in their jobs. Apprentices on the emergency response apprenticeship strand develop positive attitudes to cost efficiency and customer care. They take responsibility and are accountable for their work. Cadent Gas managers rightly value highly the contribution that apprentices make to their business.

Highly skilled trainers and assessors plan well-ordered learning activities in specialist training environments. Apprentices practise new skills safely. For example, they check gas pressures and change gas meters in a simulated area before conducting live assessments in customers' homes. Assessors provide precise oral feedback that helps apprentices improve their work to the high standard expected.

Apprentices receive highly effective support to prepare for their end-point assessment (EPA). They complete practice assessments which simulate the EPA accurately. Apprentices who fail the practice assessment receive a detailed action plan on how to improve before the next mock assessment. This additional support ensures that most apprentices pass their EPA on time. Apprentices are encouraged to achieve high grades. As a result, around a quarter of those who passed achieved a distinction grade.

Apprentices benefit from highly effective additional training such as in first aid, gas safety and asbestos awareness. Apprentices rightly value highly the training and support they receive.

Trainers and assessors provide good and detailed oral feedback on the quality of apprentices' practical work. However, a minority of apprentices make grammar and spelling mistakes in their written work. Assessors do not routinely correct these errors. As a result, these apprentices do not improve their written English quickly enough.

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

Safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders and managers promote very well a culture of safety to apprentices. Apprentices follow strict safe working practices. They always wear appropriate personal protective equipment on site. Managers and trainers model safe working in live gas environments, including in training sessions. As a result, apprentices know how to keep themselves, colleagues and members of the public safe.

Managers have put in place an appropriate safeguarding policy which includes their response to the 'Prevent' duty. Managers and trainers have completed suitable safeguarding awareness training. Managers have suitable arrangements to record and investigate safeguarding concerns. To date, there have not been any safeguarding referrals.

Staff cover the principles of safeguarding, British values and the 'Prevent' duty well during apprentices' induction. Apprentices have a basic awareness the risks posed by radicalisation and extremism. They are confident about how to stay safe online. However, apprentices working nationally are not sufficiently aware of the breadth of forms of radicalisation and the potential impact of these topics on their professional and personal lives.

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