

**Shape  
their  
future.**

**A guide to apprenticeships  
for parents, carers and  
teachers.**



Making the step from school or college to the world of work is a huge change. Young adults need lots of support to help them make the right career choices.

We have designed this information pack to provide you with all the key facts you need to consider to when deciding if an apprenticeship is the best route.

### What you'll find in this pack:

- Why an apprenticeship?
- Myth Vs Fact
- What Thames Water has to offer
- What we look for
- Meet our apprentices
- The recruitment process
- Our top tips



# Why an Apprenticeship?



University isn't the right route for everyone. With tuition costs, and a competitive market after graduation, apprenticeships are now becoming an increasingly popular avenue as a great alternative to studying for a degree.

With the introduction of the government apprenticeship Levy, employers are now driven to produce high quality apprenticeships with set standards of assessment so the training apprentices receive is consistent and valuable for a successful future.

An apprenticeship enables students to move into work straight from school or college with the support and development tools of their chosen organisation. There are usually minimum educational requirements to enter an apprenticeship and these can vary.

**Apprentices continue to learn and develop themselves in a structured way. They will be given exposure to a real working environment and will take ownership of their own schedule. They will learn new skills, be supported in self development and be able to get hands on experience in the workplace.**

As well as all of this they will be able to earn a salary while they learn, rather than taking on the debt that university can lead to.



# Myth Vs Fact

## What to expect from an apprenticeship.



### Myth

### Fact

Apprenticeships are for people who won't get the grades to go to university.

This is simply not true. Apprenticeships are for those who want to move into the workplace and begin learning by doing. Apprenticeships offer set skill sets that are highly desirable by employers in their chosen industry and offer students great career potential. They also offer the opportunity to earn while they learn. Often entry requirements for apprenticeships are fairly high and can require 5 GCSE's as a minimum.

Apprentices aren't paid very well.

People often believe that apprenticeships won't pay enough. Many companies, including us, pay above the national minimum wage. Counterbalance this with the fact that there are no tuition fees and they'll also be likely to receive pay increases as they gain further qualifications and they are a great option. Here at Thames they'll also receive our full benefits package.

Apprentices don't have a proper job, they just make the tea.

Apprentices work hard for their qualifications. They will have log books to complete and lots of classroom based studies as well as the practical skills to learn. They are fully immersed in the working environment. Tea will take a back seat.

It's not a proper permanent job.

At Thames Water our apprentices are on a permanent contract. Subject to passing the course, they will have a job with us when they qualify. Some other companies may differ.

Apprentices aren't treated the same as other employees.

From day one our apprentices are treated as our employees. From the expectations we set for them to the support and development they receive. They are fully integrated into Thames Water and our culture and values.

Graduates have better career prospects.

The effort you put in will be rewarded. We have apprentices here that joined us years ago, they qualified and really pushed themselves to develop. These apprentices are now managers across our business and have had very successful careers.

Graduates receive higher qualifications than apprentices.

Some apprenticeships do offer qualifications that attain the same level as a degree. These apprenticeships often take a few more years to qualify and aren't for everyone. We currently offer higher apprenticeships in our laboratories which, when completed, will achieve a degree.

Apprentices don't gain recognised qualifications.

Most apprenticeships offer recognised qualifications. These may be in the form of BTEC's, NVQ's, HNC's or others. They may alternatively be an industry recognised qualification. These are all as valuable as each other and lead to skilled workers with great career prospects.



# Apprenticeships at Thames - the facts

We pay our apprentices £15,000pa starting salary.

We currently offer 2 Level 3 Apprenticeships and one Higher Apprenticeship.

Our apprentices are buddied up with a previous apprentice and a mentor and have a great support network.

Our apprentices are the future talent of the business. They are valued and supported to reach their full potential.

Our Engineering apprenticeships offer dual qualifications which are fairly rare

It's a lasting career - people will always need water and wastewater services.

We work with 3 colleges who deliver some of our training and Activate who are our learning provider

There's also lots to get involved in outside of the structured learning. We value the personal development of our people.

Our apprentices earn recognised qualifications which are valued industry wide, not just by us.

Our higher apprenticeship will train you to degree level.

# Shape Their Future

## Apprenticeships at Thames - the Detail

### Mechanical and electrical apprenticeship.

On this apprenticeship they will be looking after our equipment and making sure it is maintained to a high standard. Whether the work is planned, to prevent a problem happening or to fix something when it goes wrong – they'll help to keep our services running smoothly and to a high standard. They will gain a dual qualification and may be given the opportunity to study for a HNC.

To apply for this role, they will need to have five GCSE's graded 4-9 (A to C), including English and maths.

### Electrical and Instrumentation (E&I) apprenticeship

The E&I apprenticeship involves monitoring and maintaining the systems and instruments on our sites through process software. They'll learn about our processes and how to modify them through our computerised systems to ensure our water and wastewater services keep flowing. Having an interest in technology is a real must for this role. They will gain a dual qualification and may be given the opportunity to study for a HNC.

They will need five GCSE's graded 4-9 (A to C), including English and a 5-9 or B in maths as a minimum to apply.

The above apprenticeships will be completed over a 4 year period.

The first year will be spent at college learning about fitting, mechanical maintenance and machining and studying towards a BTEC in engineering theory.

In the second year they'll be putting skills into practice and working closely with a mentor 4 days a week on site. The fifth day will be spent at college continuing the BTEC qualification.

The final two years will be based fully on site building their portfolio of completed works. They may be given the opportunity to study further for a HNC if they're doing really well.

**Qualifications gained:** Level 3 BTEC Diploma, Performing Engineering Operations (PEO) Modules, ERR (Employment Rights and Responsibilities), Functional Key Skills and Personal Learning & Thinking Skills

### Laboratory Higher Apprenticeship

These apprentices will complete a lower apprenticeship (lab technician) for 2 years and study for a HNC, either by distance learning or day release. Once, completed they'll then move on to the degree programme (lab scientist apprenticeship) for an additional 2-3 years; this is day release to university. They should have a passion for analytical chemistry and the drive and motivation to manage your learning and working life.

To join this apprenticeship they'll need a minimum of 5 GCSE's grade A\*-C **and** 2 A levels to include a minimum of a D grade in a science subject. If you do not have an A-Level we will also accept a BTEC in Science.

**Qualifications gained:** HNC, Degree in subjects related to lab science or analytics.



# How to do well

## What we look for in our apprentices.

We celebrate differences. We're looking for Apprentices from a range of cultures and backgrounds to help make our business a success.

We like people who are passionate about their progression, have a thirst for learning and really want to make a difference.

### We are looking for people who:

- Have a genuine **desire to learn** and drive their own development. We will provide plenty of support and advice along the way but they need to have the appetite to learn and develop.
- Are **committed** to a **career in engineering**. They need to show what it is about engineering and a hands on environment that excites them.
- Show a **can-do attitude**. There's no such thing as "can't" and we like our apprentices to stretch their thinking and come up with new ideas and solutions to problems and challenges.
- Being creative and proactive are a must. Thinking outside the box to come up with **creative ideas and solutions** will get them far.
- Will take **ownership** of tasks and are motivated. We like our apprentices to follow their tasks through to resolution. That's anything from completing work on time to a high standard to owning their development responsibilities.
- Are a good team player and have excellent **communication skills**. There may be times they need to ask for help or support another team member. Its all about working together at Thames.
- Keep **health and safety** at the forefront of everything they do. We have zero tolerance on health and safety risks and want everyone home safe at the end of the day.



## How to be great

We want our apprentices to succeed and reach their full potential. To be a great match for our programme, they will:

- 1 Be self-motivated, able to develop yourself and take ownership of your career.
- 2 Have clear passion and drive to be someone who influences and shapes our future organisation.
- 3 Be curious and comfortable; ready to ask questions and discover the answers.
- 4 Enjoy being collaborative and part of a team, but equally adept in taking the lead and working on initiative.
- 5 Open to change, resilient when faced with moments of uncertainty or ambiguity.
- 6 Understand the value of stakeholder relationships and network with people of all levels and backgrounds.
- 7 Share new ideas and ways of working.
- 8 Be ready to apply everything you learn in your day to day role and any projects outside of this.
- 9 Ask for feedback and are open to receive and build the knowledge and insight gained in a proactive way.

Whilst you as parents and advisors can guide them, we want our apprentices to stand on their own two feet and take ownership of their development. We will assess them on this throughout our application process and would recommend you encourage them and support them but not to complete their application with them.



# Meet Our Apprentices

Now you know all about the programmes available, see what our current and past apprentices have to say about their experiences.



## **Katherine Whatley - ICA Electrical Apprentice**

Before I started the apprenticeship I wasn't sure what an ICA Electrical apprentice was. Having spent time on site I have been able to get a better understanding of what it means. In short we look after all of the instruments and systems that monitor Thames Water's sites. I applied for the apprenticeship because I wanted to become an engineer whilst working and earning. I have learnt so much and gained more experience than I would have had I pursued a different route. I have met other apprentices from various companies and had the chance to get involved with the Brathay Apprenticeship Challenge, meeting HRH Prince Charles and spreading the word about apprenticeships. I have really enjoyed the experience so far.

## **John Payne - ICA Electrical Apprentice**

The apprenticeship with Thames Water stood out to me because of the many opportunities for training and development. There is a clear career path and working at Thames really excites me. No day in the workplace is exactly the same and that's something I've enjoyed in my second year. Overall there is a massive amount of work to complete. You are given all of the resources you need, so with the right motivation and attitude it can be achieved quite easily. I went on the "Outward Bounds" trip to Derbyshire and I have visited both the Olympic Park and Hyde Park as part of the apprenticeship.



# Meet Our Apprentices



## **Catherine Corridan - Mechanical & Electrical Apprentice**

The people I work alongside are always there to help and guide us through anything we made need. My colleagues are very supportive and try to pass all their knowledge on to us and it helps working with those who also completed their apprenticeship with Thames. A typical day at Thames could range from installing a new pump to wiring up and installing a panel to control an electrical or mechanical piece of plant. All the tasks carried out from day to day are hands on and practical. It feels like an accomplishment when you complete a job as you know it will impact the process of cleaning the water which is then given to the public. Knowing you are part of the process of providing clean and safe water makes the whole job really satisfying.

## **Tom Inwood - Mechanical & Electrical Apprentice**

I have built strong trusting working relationships with the qualified staff that have supported me and shared their knowledge with me. In my third year I was informed that Thames Water would fund my college placement to complete a HNC in general engineering so I continued my education on day release and also continued my practical experience on site, gaining more skills and experience. It has been challenging and intense at times but it has also given me confidence, multiple skills, job satisfaction and the best invaluable education in engineering.



# Meet Our Apprentices



## **Wayne Fraser – Thames Valley North Region Operations Manager**

I started my career at Thames Water in 1991 as part of the mechanical and electrical apprenticeship scheme, which was a great alternative to a university education and allowed me to work and learn at the same time. The experience I have gained through the years by working in various parts of the business has allowed me the opportunity to develop and progress. I now work in the Wholesale Waste Operations, leading a large team over a large geographical area within the Thames Valley area and am accountable for the day to day operation of our waste water treatment works. Every day is very different and therefore offers me a variety of opportunities that allow me to practice my skills but also learn new ones and develop myself for the next opportunity.



## **Ricky O'Sullivan – Performance Manager**

I joined Thames Water in 2005 as a Maintenance Apprentice. It was a very exciting apprenticeship and I gained a number of qualifications whilst being in the work place. Thames Water takes development very seriously and like to develop their staff. I am now a Performance Manager and run 20 sites which I am controller of premises for and I'm responsible for managing a team and multiple contractors. A large number of my colleagues have been here for a long time, many with 20+ years experience. I think, that shows this company is a great place to work.



# The recruitment process

We like to challenge our candidates and see their full potential throughout the recruitment process. The most important thing is that they show us the real them. This process is designed to allow our candidates to decide if Thames Water is the right place for them and vice versa.

## Initial Online Application

- Should be a thorough, well thought out application.
- Include work experience and qualifications
- Include lots of detail and examples in the application questions as these are scored.

## Telephone Interview

- Competency based questions.
- Passion for engineering
- Examples of the attributes mentioned on the previous page of this document and reference to application form questions.

## Assessment Centre

- Half Day Event
- Group Exercise
- Interview
- Written Engineering Assessments (GCSE Level)
- Networking with managers and apprentices

## Medical Assessment

- Checks carried out to assess that they can work safely in their proposed environment.
- Must have full colour vision, weigh under 112kg and be clean shaven for correct face fit of gas protection mask.



# Our top tips.

- Look on the national apprenticeship website, there is lots of information here including the detail on the apprenticeships.
- Seek advice; careers advisors and specialist agencies can help if you are struggling to make a choice and advise your young adult.
- Research the company AND the apprenticeship.
- Be yourself throughout any recruitment process.
- Share examples of your interests in your chosen field.
- Think long term, not short term – most apprenticeships require a significant commitment.

# Further Support Available

We hope that this guide has been helpful and provided you with some useful information about our apprenticeships.

If you require any further support please contact us via the details on our website .  
We'd be happy to help.

