

REFERENCE

2526259

RELEASE DATE

September 2025

SUBJECT

Various queries related to NI Water apprenticeships, including any current staff shortages or vacancies in areas *for each of the various categories of craft workers, tradespersons or other occupations for which a formal apprenticeship would be appropriate as a career pathway for a trainee worker.*

RESPONSE

NI Water replies as follows to your queries.

1. *Can you provide the numbers of new entrants for each of the last three financial years for formal apprenticeships at the Northern Ireland Water, with the totals provided separately by job title/craft/trade associated with the apprenticeship. [Please note I am not requesting numbers for other forms of training only formal apprenticeships. Please note further I do not want the total number of apprenticeships for each year – only the new entrants for apprenticeships in each of the last three years.]*

Overview

NI Water's double award-winning Entry-Level Academy runs multi-year apprenticeships, higher-level apprenticeships and graduate schemes across a range of disciplines. Entry Level employees are engaged in programmes that combine formal qualifications with extensive on-the-job rotations and consistent mentoring/support structures in areas including water utilities operations, mechanical & electrical, science, capital delivery, cyber/telemetry, procurement, customer & intelligent operations, and multiple graduate streams. Each participant is supported by a mentor, buddy or line manager, as well as the dedicated NI Water Entry Level Academy team. Their programmes vary in length, typically 2–5 years depending on role and qualification level.

Set out below are the details of NI Water's Entry Level Academy recruitment and programme details for three intake years: April 2022–March 2023 (September 2022

intake), April 2023–March 2024 (September 2023 intake), and April 2024–March 2025 (September 2024 intake).

Total recruits by intake:

- 26 (September 2022)
- 30 (September 2023)
- 23 (September 2024)

April 2022 – March 2023 (Total recruited 26):

- 12 Water Utility Apprentices — 3-year Level 3 (Water/Wastewater Treatment) with Certification and Assessment Board for the Water Industry (CABWI) certification; on-the-job rotations across water and wastewater operations.
- 6 Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) Apprentices — 4-year National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 + Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Level 3 with bespoke NVQ units, supplier-delivered mechanical equipment training, and basic electrical training.
- 8 Higher Level Apprentices (HLA) — Capital Programme Management Office (CPMO) & Capital Delivery — 5-year Level 5 in civil/construction engineering; college plus multi-area rotations; option to progress to university.
- 2 HLA — Cyber Security — 4-year Level 5 in cyber security and networking; three years college + one year on-the-job.

April 2023 – March 2024 (Total recruited 30)

- 10 Water Utility Apprentices — same 3-year Level 3 Water/Wastewater programme as above.
- 4 Scientific HLAs — 3-year foundation degree in Applied/Medical Sciences; rotations across chemistry (7 methods) or microbiology (5 methods) labs.
- 7 HLAs — CPMO & Capital Delivery — same structure as previous HLA for capital delivery.
- 1 HLA — Commercial Procurement — 5-year programme leading to Bachelor of Science (BSc) (Quantity Surveying & Commercial Management) with part-time university study.

- 2 HLAs — Telemetry Technology — 3-year Level 5 foundation degree in computing with on-the-job learning.
- 2 Graduate Trainee Accountants — 4-year chartership pathway with rotations across finance functions.
- 2 Graduate Trainee Data Analysts — 2-year immersive data analytics placements with Microsoft certification opportunities.
- 2 Graduate Engineers (Capital Delivery focus) — 2-year graduate programme with chartership progression options (Institute of Chartered Engineers - ICE, Institute of Water - IoW, Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management - CIWEM).

April 2024 – March 2025 (Total recruited 23)

- 2 Scientific Apprentices — 3-year Level 3 diploma in Applied Biomedical Science; on-the-job sample reception training; college in years 1–2, year 3 fully on the job.
- 4 Scientific HLAs — 3-year foundation degree with laboratory rotations (Chemistry and Microbiology).
- 9 HLAs — CPMO & Capital Delivery — 5-year Level 5 civil/construction engineering programme with multi-area rotations.
- 2 HLAs — Customer & Operations Directorate Intelligent Operations Centre (C&OD IOC) — 5-year foundation degree in Business Data Management or Business & Enterprise with rotations across five areas.
- 1 HLA — Commercial Procurement — 5-year part-time BSc (Quantity Surveying & Commercial Management) plus on-the-job training.
- 1 Graduate Technology Project Manager — 2-year programme delivering IT projects; opportunity for professional qualifications (Axelos, British Computing Society - BCS).
- 1 Graduate — Geographic Information Systems (GIS) — 2-year programme with part-time postgraduate certificate and on-the-job project work.
- 2 Graduate Accountants — 4-year chartership pathway (same structure as earlier graduate accountant roles).
- 1 Civil Engineering Graduate (Capital Projects) — 2-year graduate placement with chartership and Master of Science (MSc) progression potential.

Quick counts by broad category (all intakes combined)

- Water Utility Apprentices: 22 (12 + 10) across first two intakes; none listed in September 2024 intake.
- Scientific / Scientific HLAs: 10 (4 + 2 + 4 across intakes).
- M&E / Mechanical: 6.
- HLAs (CPMO & Capital Delivery): 24 (8 + 7 + 9).
- HLAs in other specialisms (Cyber, Telemetry, Commercial Procurement, C&OD IOC): 7.
- Graduates (accountancy, data, engineering, tech, GIS, project manager): 12.

In addition, it might also be of interest to note that our Entry Level intake for 2025/26 took up employment with us earlier this week. We welcomed 23 new recruits, as set out below.

April 2025 – March 2026 (Total recruited 23)

- 12 Water Utility Apprentices
- 2 Scientific Apprentices
- 4 Scientific HLAs
- 1 Net Zero Electrical Engineering HLA
- 1 Data Management HLA
- 1 Financial Systems HLA
- 2 Graduate Trainee Data Analysts

2. Can you provide the current number of staffing vacancies/shortages at the Northern Ireland Water for each of the various categories of craft workers, tradespersons or other occupations for which a formal apprenticeship would be appropriate as a career pathway for a trainee worker?

At the time of writing, there are 12 vacancies that align with career pathways for Entry Level Apprentices in NI Water on completion of their training programme. Seven roles are in M&E Services and five are in Water Utilities teams in Water and Wastewater.

Entry Level programme graduates are assigned to vacancies of this kind upon successful completion of their training, and subject to their proximity to the location of vacant posts. This is because many of our operational roles require postholders to

reside within a set distance of the job, in order to ensure responsiveness to emergency and on-call requirements.