

9. Growing our own engineering talent



Situation

We have 1,350 employees. Many work in specialist roles (such as water and wastewater treatment, water and wastewater networks, cost and risk management, clean water chemistry) and across a range of engineering disciplines.

Given competition and rarity of these specialisms in the local labour market, we are finding difficulties in recruiting and retaining the right calibre of individuals. We are therefore focused on growing our own pipeline of internal talent through an apprenticeship programme.

Over time apprentices can fill higher level skills gaps and growing our own mitigates the risk of limited expertise in the external market. We will develop tailored programmes, with use of external educational partnership, to ensure appropriate skills are developed and maintained within the company. Over time will reduce our reliance on external consultant support and retain a range of core skills and competencies internally

Apprentices can also address the age profile concerns by cultivating younger people and assist with succession planning. There is good potential that those who go through an entry level programme to be career oriented and willing to develop their careers in the future in NI Water.

Action

We have embarked on an ambitious Entry Level strategy focused on attracting, developing and retaining new talent.

We have repositioned ourselves to be more attractive to prospective recruits:

- Establishing a NI Water Apprentice Academy Brand
- Using a social media platforms to reach our target audience
- Working in partnership with training providers, colleges and awarding bodies
- Increasing our value proposition
- Promoting our attempts to increase the diversity of our workforce in underrepresented roles



Results

In 12 months since embarking on our new strategy, we have successfully recruited 40 water and wastewater apprentices, 6 project control engineer high-level apprentices and 6 asset management Graduates. A further 30+ entry level roles have been identified for 2022. This programme will align with our graduate development and ongoing management development programmes, being led by our Learning and Engagement Team.