



Case Study

Part of the Centrica Group, British Gas supplies gas and electricity to homes and businesses and is Britain's biggest operator in the installation and maintenance of domestic central heating and gas appliances.

The **British Gas Energy Academies** recruit some 500 apprentices a year. The current Apprenticeship Programme is completed in 104 weeks (previously 78 weeks). The additional weeks further increase the work-based learning experience of our apprentices. Each apprentice will achieve NVQ Level 3 in Domestic Natural Gas Maintenance or Installation.

An **Advanced Apprentice Programme** develops high calibre Gas Technicians capable of maintaining and operating complex plant and equipment. This is a great introduction for potential employees to power generation/gas storage facilities (Centrica Storage).

In the 4-year **Centrica Energy Advanced Apprentice Programme** apprentices gain the qualifications required in a modern apprenticeship (NVQ level 3) in a specific discipline. They experience broad engineering and plant operations and further education to HNC level.

“Our front line teams are vital to the success of our business as they interact with customers every day. It's why we invest over £25m each year in training and development. As well as continuing to focus on traditional engineering, we are developing expertise in the areas of Smart Metering and New Energy, creating hundreds of new jobs each year.”

Phil Bentley Managing Director

Recruitment and retention

The minimum application age for the British Gas Apprenticeship is 16 whilst the average age is 20. The benefits of recruiting slightly older apprentices are that it gives more confidence to customers, ensures maturity in customer-facing skills and provides good network support for the younger apprentices. 95% complete the training.

Career development and company values

Over 70% of gas servicing and installation managers originally joined as apprentices. Customers see apprentices and engineers as our ambassadors. In 2007, British Gas created a partnership with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme in order to integrate the core elements of its Gold Award into the apprentice training.

One hundred and fifty British Gas apprentices successfully completed the Gold Award in 2010.

Productivity and cost of training

British Gas apprentices on the in-house training programme are, on average, 25% more productive and qualify three months sooner than externally trained engineers. The net cost to train each new apprentice is £23,000 but the benefits over the longer term outweigh this cost.

Benefits versus costs

British Gas provides a premium, high cost/high quality service. It requires its staff to be technically competent and customer friendly. The key is recruiting the right number of skilled staff to support an expanding business and meet customers' needs.

Other benefits

Technology-driven companies benefit from young people who are exposed to various forms of new technology on the Apprenticeship Programme. At British Gas the gas-technical (servicing) engineers are linked remotely to the business via laptop technology for work allocation.

Diversity

Centrica and British Gas aims to be the employer of choice and for its engineering workforce to reflect more closely its customer profile. Their Attraction & Diversity team works with schools, colleges, communities and Government bodies to attract applications from under-represented groups.

The British Gas Apprenticeship has given me so much experience. Not only have I met a variety of new people but I've also built strong relationships with customers. British Gas gave me the confidence to do this! This apprenticeship has given me a new career path I initially never knew about.



Shaunaugh Brown Technical Installation Engineer