



How Apprenticeships help George Wimpey to grow and deal with a shortfall in skilled trades people

“We see our Apprentices as future contract managers and site managers. If they don’t wish to follow that career route then they can work for our subcontractors, using the skills that they have successfully trained in. Either way we are contributing to the pool of skilled trades people available to our industry.”
Malcolm Vaughan, Training Coordinator George Wimpey, West London.

George Wimpey is one of the largest housebuilders in the UK, and with the announcement that it is merging with Taylor Woodrow, it will become the biggest housebuilder in the UK. It is also one of the largest employers of Apprentices, with up to 400 at any one time across the UK following Apprenticeships in over 20 different trades.

At George Wimpey West London, Training Coordinator Malcolm Vaughan has been responsible for organising the employment, training and support of Apprentices for over five years

Apprentices are the future

He says: “We see our Apprentices as the future of our business. Over the years there has been a shortfall of skilled trades people and if we don’t support new entrants into the industry, we won’t have enough people to fulfil our contractual commitments.”

Close working with Training Providers

George Wimpey West London works with three training providers, including Richmond Upon Thames College. “We work closely with our training providers to give our Apprentices the best support we can,” says Malcolm.

Responsible for over 20 Apprentices at any one time, Malcolm works to give each individual the attention they need. He mentors them over the course of their Apprenticeship and every one of them has his mobile number. He also aims to attend their appraisals with both Training Provider and their Line Manager.

Good support and quality training

“The key to a young person successfully completing their Apprenticeship is good support throughout their training,” he explains.

““We have successfully contributed 100% to the industry through Apprenticeships”

It is also providing the young person with good quality training and work satisfaction. Malcolm points out that whilst George Wimpey could offer Apprenticeships to more young people, they choose not to do so because that would reduce the quality of work they undertake.

“We ensure that they do the work they are employed to do,” he points out. “They learn through experience and if there were too many Apprentices, there probably wouldn’t be the opportunities for them to really develop their practical skills. Jobs like sweeping up have to be done, but we make sure that everyone takes their turn and it isn’t not just left to the Apprentice.”

Malcolm also believes that Apprentices should be supported through the more challenging times of their training.

Good relationships

“Some companies don’t tolerate a lack of commitment from their Apprentices, and nor do we,” he says. “The difference is that because we maintain close relationships with our Apprentices, if they experience a temporary lack of focus during their two-year Apprenticeship, we help them over a difficult patch and help them back on track.”

This helps George Wimpey boost its success rate for qualified Apprentices.

Malcolm explains a situation he faced: “An Apprentice saw his friends making more money than him and was considering giving up his training. We talked it through and I pointed out that they were seeking short-term gain over long-term achievement and earning potential. Luckily he agreed and he’s now a trainee site manager with us.”

Career interviews

When Apprentices have completed their training, they have a career interview with Malcolm.

“We discuss what they want to do and where they see their future,” he says. “If we think they have the potential, we will put them forward for trainee site managers or contract managers. If they would prefer to follow their trade, we will aim to place them with one of our subcontractors. A few decide that their future lies outside the company, but most stay close to the company that trained them.”

Out of the latest group of seven qualified Apprentices, three are now trainee managers with George Wimpey, the other four are working for the company’s subcontractors.

“For us, that’s a great success rate,” says Malcolm. “We have successfully contributed 100% to the industry through Apprenticeships.”



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Want more information on how to benefit from the Apprenticeship programme in South London?

If you would like further information about Apprenticeships in South London call the Apprenticeship Hotline on 0800 169 4824 or visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk

