

Young People in Yorkshire Start Careers With New British Gas Apprenticeship Scheme

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British Gas launches new Customer Service Apprenticeship scheme at its contact centre in Leeds. Its partnership with Leeds City College will recruit nine young people from Yorkshire into the new roles. Research commissioned by British Gas shows young people in Leeds are considering apprenticeships over university. British Gas, the country's largest energy supplier, has officially launched a new apprenticeship in Customer Services at its Newbridge House contact centre in Leeds.

Nine young people aged 18-24 from Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield, have secured places on the new Advanced Apprenticeship in Customer Service.

The pilot programme, delivered in partnership with Leeds City College, has been set up to offer young people full-time employment as an alternative option to university.

British Gas received around 160 applications for the programme when it opened this summer. The recruits have all completed either an A-level or Advanced BTEC to qualify for the scheme.

On completing the 18 month training programme, the apprentices will gain a Diploma in Customer Services and will be qualified Customer Service Advisors.

The apprentices will join almost 900 colleagues employed at the contact centre. The team has responded to more than two million calls from British Gas customers over the past year.

Sarah Fanthorpe, Head of Customer Service at Newbridge House in Leeds, said: "I'm delighted to be welcoming our first apprentices to the British Gas team here in Leeds.

"We employ around 2,000 people in Yorkshire, and we've been working with Leeds City College to create opportunities to get local young people into employment.

"Our newest apprentices will play an important part in helping us to deliver quality service to our customers."

Leeds City College works across all industry sectors both locally and nationally. Its current apprenticeship portfolio covers almost 30 specialisms, ranging from animal care to engineering, customer service, and marketing.

Leeds City College Director of Operations David Gaughan said: "Leeds City College is delighted to be working with British Gas in developing this apprenticeship within its customer contact centre.

"Both the College and British Gas are committed to providing a fantastic learning experience to the apprentices over the course of their training, with the opportunity for further progression at the end of the programme."

British Gas has a long tradition of offering engineering apprenticeships at its Ofsted-rated Training Academy at Canal Street in Leeds. More than 1,000 engineering apprentices have qualified at the Academy in recent years.

The new recruits join a total of 1,200 apprentices currently on training programmes with British Gas nationwide.

Independent research* commissioned by British Gas in July surveyed young people (aged 15-19) in Leeds exploring their views of apprenticeships as an alternative to university.

The findings showed:

- More than one third (35%) of Leeds school leavers have considered this vocational route as an alternative to a university education.
- More than two thirds (64%) of 15-19 year-olds in Leeds who planned to go to university had also discussed securing a place on an apprenticeship with their teachers.

For further information on career opportunities with British Gas, visit britishgasjobs.co.uk or follow [@BritishGasJobs](https://twitter.com/BritishGasJobs) on Twitter.

Case study of British Gas apprentice:

Elliott Wilkes, 18, from Crossgates, Leeds, applied for the apprenticeship in preference to university, to get a foot on the career ladder. He completed nine GCSEs at Corpus Christi Catholic College. He then gained 3 A-levels in Business, Economics and Psychology at Notre Dame Catholic College this summer.

He said: "I really enjoyed my time at college. But I knew university wasn't for me. I wanted to get a job rather than having four years of study and then not knowing if I had a job at the end."

Elliott worked in a customer service role for a well-known high street retailer which made him realise he'd enjoy the apprenticeship.

He said: "I've worked for a while during the summer holidays, so knew that I enjoyed working with people.

"The apprenticeship would let me help people and that appealed to me too. I'm really looking forward to starting training with other employees to learn how we serve customers.

"I have friends who are already in good jobs after starting apprenticeships when they left school. Knowing they were earning a wage and still learning made me realise an apprenticeship was a good career path.

"I'm looking forward to learning this year and hopefully positioning myself well for a career with British Gas in the future."

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