

Home grown talent helps plumbing and heating business grow

A.M. Norris Ltd is a firm of plumbing and heating contractors based in Coalville, Leicestershire. A well-known and established company, they're one of the leading providers of plumbing and heating services in the Midlands area.

The A.M Norris 'story' began in 1971 when owner Alan Norris set up the business, aged 21. Since then, the firm has gone from strength to strength and now employs 211 people working across various departments, including a team of supervisors.

Apprenticeships and A.M. Norris Ltd

With Alan Norris himself starting his career as an apprentice plumber back in 1965, A.M. Norris Ltd has always firmly believed in nurturing young talent. Every year, they take on four to six new apprentices.

The company has embraced the new Level 3 Plumbing & Domestic Heating Technician Apprenticeship and appreciates the benefits it will bring to their business and the wider plumbing and heating trade in England.

Director, Chris Clarke, explains: *'The new Level 3 apprenticeship will raise standards within our industry by giving young people a greater depth of knowledge and skill. We used to find that the old Level 2 qualification didn't always equip the apprentice with everything they needed to work unsupervised, which is naturally something that's important to us.'*

'It's great that the Level 3 will enable this to happen, as the young person will be fully-qualified at the end of the course. With the longer training period of up to four years rather than two, our apprentices will also have more time to develop maturity as well as gaining work experience. It's a win-win for both us and them.'

How the apprenticeships work

At A.M. Norris Ltd, the key things they look for in new apprentices are a good attitude and commitment to learning. Adds Chris: *'We have no problem attracting apprentices here – in fact we have the opposite problem and often can't take on everyone who applies!'*

Once they're on board, each apprentice is assigned a mentor: an existing and experienced team member that they work alongside during their apprenticeship. Whilst this approach will remain with the new Level 3 qualification, the difference is that the learners will ultimately gain the skills they need to work alone.

'The mentoring system is valuable to us as young people often mature at different times. Having a dedicated mentor they can talk to, and knowing there's someone to ask questions of whilst they're on the job, is really useful.'

Once an apprentice has completed their course, A.M. Norris Ltd are often keen to keep them on. Says Chris: *'We have a good track record of retaining our staff. We always look at opportunities for our employees to develop and progress into different areas of the business.'*

With their own company owner having started out as an apprentice, A.M Norris Ltd know from personal experience that there's no limit to how careers can develop.

Why take on apprentices?

With long-term experience of recruiting and training apprentices, A.M. Norris Ltd are keen advocates of the benefits to employing young people.

Says Chris: *'Apprentices are genuine home-grown talent. They come with energy and enthusiasm, and you can teach them your way of working from the start. So they don't come with any "baggage" or issues from a previous company and different working practises – so they won't have had the chance to develop any bad habits!'*

Like many employers who take on apprentices, Chris also finds that apprentices bring other advantages to the firm. *'As young people, they're full of new ideas and the latest knowledge around things like technology. This brings a breath of fresh air into the company, which can have a positive effect on the team. They'll also come equipped with new ways of doing things, which can work really well when combined with the experience and expertise of our older team members.'*

'I'd certainly recommend taking on a Level 3 apprentice to any plumbing and heating firm looking to expand their business. The new qualification will bring in up to date knowledge and skills, as well as younger people who can grow with the company and take it forward into the future.'

About the new Level 3 Plumbing & Domestic Heating Apprenticeship

The new Level 3 Plumbing & Domestic Heating Technician Apprenticeship is aimed at all sizes of plumbing and heating businesses in England. It's supported by Plumbing Heating Skills Partnership (PHSP), a collaboration of key industry players, led by BPEC.

Set to become the new industry standard in July 2020, this trailblazing apprenticeship has been specially designed to meet employers' needs, fill skills gaps and secure the future of England's plumbing and heating trade.

Level 3 apprentices will be equipped with the latest skills and knowledge around core plumbing and heating aspects. They'll also specialise in either natural gas, oil, solid fuel or environmental technologies – so the course can be tailored to meet the current and future needs of individual business.

Find out more

For more information about the new Level 3 Plumbing & Domestic Heating Technician Apprenticeship, please contact your local training provider or college.