



CASE STUDY

NI Water - ILM Level 3 Award in Mentoring

September 2021

The Challenge

In April 2021 Northern Ireland Water recruited 30 Water and Wastewater Apprentices who will be undergoing a three-year training programme, making them experts in the industry. We required experienced professionals from all functions within the organisation to provide support and guidance for the apprentices throughout their three-year training programme. We had a vast amount of knowledgeable, experienced professionals in their field who were happy to help, however they lacked mentoring experience and qualifications.

We had already investigated the options available to us and identified we wanted our Managers to receive an accredited certificate in Mentoring. We approached a number of organisations. Cosensa's proposal for the delivery of **ILM Level 3 Award in Mentoring** satisfied the learning outcomes we required, met all our criteria and they also provided a competitive rate for training and accreditation.

By April 2021 we had selected 30 NI Water people managers to mentor the apprentices. These managers were chosen for this programme following an application process which was managed by Northern Ireland Water. A lot of these managers had previous experience coaching and mentoring their teams, but they lacked official accreditation and they had to be willing to set aside the time between April and August 2021 to complete the mentoring programme.

The Solution

From the outset communication has been a main strength of Cosensa. This was the first time Northern Ireland Water had launched a Mentoring programme and our contract manager, Laura MacMillan, approached this with a very patient and reassuring nature. Before the delegates commenced their training, they were introduced to the trainer, the accredited body and the learning system they would be using. Everyone had the opportunity to ask questions and as I have highlighted previously, Cosensa made themselves readily available for any questions that came to light.

During the programme our workforce were also going through major incidents and an increased workload. With this in mind Cosensa made the relevant calls and requested an extension for those who needed - again showcasing a genuine care for our workforce and work-life balance.

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The programme was **ILM accredited** and a **blended learning approach**. Delegates had to cover certain areas and produce work on this. They completed a self-study workbook, attended online group workshops and participated in three half-hour one-to-one coaching sessions. Assignments were submitted through an online portal: there was a knowledge exam, a portfolio of evidence of mentoring two or three people for six hours, and a reflective journal. In addition, we specifically requested Reverse Mentoring to be covered in this training which Vidette took in her stride and incorporated within the programme.

The solution Cosensa offered proved cost effective for NI Water. Cosensa managed all scheduling of meetings and workloads directly with the delegates which meant our L&D personnel could focus on other areas of work.

We particularly liked the fact our delegates were introduced the director of Cosensa and the director of the ILM accreditor at the very start of the programme. This showcased their transparency and engendered trust amongst the delegates.

We did encounter some timing issues along the way. The timing of launch had to be pushed back slightly at our end, this was met with understanding by Laura and Vidette. Also three months into the programme the workload involved proved difficult as it was during a time when our people were having to respond to major incidents. It can be hard to manage external projects such as this, however we approached Cosensa and they were able to provide a one month extension which allowed the delegates to submit their work whilst dealing with their increased workload.

Testimony

From the outset, Cosensa showcased a very strong work ethic through quick responses and relevant questioning. They showed a genuine interest in our workforce and were very clear as to how they could help.

Laura, Vidette and the Team have been very clear when setting proposed deadlines, upcoming work / projects / sessions. They get back to all requests promptly and are always readily available for a meeting if needed. The trainer has built a strong rapport with all delegates in the programme and although it has only just come to an end, the feedback we have had about Cosensa has been very positive. The delegates worked extremely hard throughout this programme whilst carrying out their daily working duties and were fully supported by their trainer, Vidette Hughes.

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