

A handbook for employers
recruiting and
employing apprentices

Employer Handbook

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to have a look at our employer handbook for apprenticeships.

This guide is intended for those employers who are thinking of taking on an apprenticeship for the first time, or have started the process and need additional advice.

We wanted to produce a handbook for you as an employer to help improve your understanding of the apprenticeship system and to provide a useful source of additional information.

This has been a joint production between Bury College as a quality training and skills provider of apprenticeships and the employers who have apprentices with the college. The information contained within this handbook is based on established good practice and through discussions with employers through the employer forum network*.

***This information is accurate and up to date as of January 2015. Please consult with your local training and skills provider networks on developments especially around future funding of apprenticeships.**

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What are

Apprenticeships?

An apprenticeship is a way for young people and older members of your work force to earn while they learn in a real job, gaining a real qualification and a real future.

Hiring apprentices helps your business to grow your own talent by developing a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.

Quality is key to apprenticeships – providing high quality training that benefits both apprentices and employers.

Economic benefit – tell your supply chains and “make the link”!

More than 100,000 employers, in over 160,000 workplaces, currently use apprenticeships to attract new talent, re-skill existing staff and tackle skill shortages. Apprenticeships are available to businesses of all sizes and from all sectors in England. Employment is a fundamental part of an apprenticeship. An apprentice must be employed in a job role with a productive purpose.

Improve your bottom line

Apprenticeships deliver real returns to your bottom line, helping to improve productivity and competitiveness. Training apprentices can also be more cost effective than hiring skilled staff, leading to lower overall training and recruitment costs.

Fill your skills gaps

Apprenticeships deliver skills designed around your business needs providing the skilled workers you need for the future. They also help you develop the specialist skills you need to keep pace with the latest technology and working practices in your sector.

Motivate your workforce

Apprentices tend to be eager, motivated, flexible and loyal to the company that invested in them. Remember, an apprentice is with you because they want to be – they have made an active choice to learn on the job and have a commitment to a specific career.

The positives

There has never been a better time to employ an apprentice. There is a skills system in place that offers a range of quality services to employers. These include;

1. Business organisational analysis to help identify opportunities
2. Recruitment and selection
3. Assessment
4. Training and skills assessment

All providers are quality approved and will have quality kite marks such as International Organisation for Standardisation, Investors in People and all are inspected by Ofsted.

- Apprenticeships develop a motivated, skilled and qualified workforce.
- Businesses that offer apprenticeships view them as beneficial to their long-term development.
- According to the British Chambers of Commerce, most employ an apprentice to improve the skills base within their business.
- Apprentices are supported by quality training from local training organisations.
- Nearly every employer that takes on an apprentice (96%) reports benefits to their business.
- 72% of businesses report improved productivity as a result of employing an apprentice.
- Apprenticeships are boosting productivity by enabling businesses to grow their skills base.

The negatives

“Red Tape”

Yes there is some. It will not come as any surprise that there is a certain amount of red tape. But, there are a host of training providers and colleges who are well versed in making the whole process as simple as possible for you so that you can get on with the job of training your apprentice for your business needs and keep red tape to a minimum.

Training providers and colleges have a dedicated team to help serve businesses with all aspects of recruiting and training an apprentice and help with administration tasks.

Too long a process; I might as well just get someone in from elsewhere...

You can, but you will probably pay more in many cases top market rates for skill sets and ability. If you take the longer term view, the evidence shows that it is far more profitable to use the apprenticeship system for recruitment and training new and existing staff.

How do I recruit an apprentice?

There are some key elements to consider before you recruit an apprentice.

Ensure your business has a belief in apprenticeships and their worth and be prepared to invest in them.

Spend time looking at roles that might be suitable for apprentices. You may have temping roles that you could develop into apprenticeships, for example or a certain facet of the business is growing and needs support developing.

You can recruit an apprentice in a number of ways:

By yourself; advertising an apprenticeship in the media and on the National Apprenticeship Service website **www.apprenticeships.gov.uk**, through a recruitment agency, by word of mouth or by speaking to your local schools and asking if someone is interested when they leave school. You may have had someone on work experience who may be suitable and interested in working for you after they have left school.

By using the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS); they will take details of your vacancy and advertise it through the NAS website. You will then be sent candidates to interview.

By using a training provider; this is by far the most popular and helps save time and resources on your behalf. Training providers and colleges have access to both schools in their area and a large number of students who are studying at colleges on a range of courses full time and vocational.

To make the process of recruiting a new employee easier, training providers and colleges can offer a vacancy matching service. They will help you work through and develop the apprenticeship you have in mind to offer. Once that is done they will ensure it is posted to the NAS website, as well as advertise it through their own recruitment channels.

Each candidate would go through a functional skills test and interview process, ensuring you receive the perfect match for your vacancy, saving you time and money as it is a free service.

So, can my current staff do an apprenticeship?

Yes, this is not an age restricted programme, so it can help with all your skills requirements if need be.

Key dates for your calendar

Most school leavers at 16, 17 and 18 will be ready and available to start with you from May–June each year.

Recruitment of apprentices from schools and colleges can start as early as January each year.

National Apprenticeship Week

Every year a week is set aside for National Apprenticeship week.

What if I want an apprentice role outside of these key dates?

It does not matter what time of year your business wishes to recruit an apprentice as the recruitment and assessment services are available all year round.

Courses

- Apprenticeships are made up of several qualification components, brought together and called frameworks, which can include:
- NVQ Level 2, 3, 4 or 5 or other qualifications such as Diplomas, Foundation Degrees or HNDs
- Technical Certificate Level 2 or 3
- Functional Skills Level 1 or 2
- Personal Learning and Thinking

Apprenticeships are awarded at Intermediate, Advanced and Higher Level.

Your commitments

Health and Safety

As an employer you must take all necessary steps for securing the health, safety and welfare of any apprentice in your care and ensure they are treated no differently than other members of your workforce. This includes risk assessment, supervision, provision of personal protective equipment, and training. If there is an accident or occupational disease that affects an apprentice it must be reported to the college so obligations to monitor accidents can be met.

Q. Do I have to employ my apprentice?

A. Yes. Please read below.

Q. Does the apprentice need a contract of employment?

A. Yes. There are two documents here. An Apprenticeship Contract and a Contract of Employment.

Q. What is the Apprenticeship Contract and is it different to the Contract of Employment?

A. The Apprenticeship Contract is a stand-alone document governed by the laws of England and Wales and is in addition to the Contract of Employment.

It is a requirement for any employer who recruits an apprentice to produce this document and for its contents to be agreed between the employer and the apprentice.

The contract will incorporate a dual agreement to undertake an apprenticeship, and includes the basic terms of employment, and confirmation of the commitment to uphold the rules of health and safety and equality and diversity.

Q. What benefits should my apprentice receive?

A. Apprentices are entitled to the same holidays as their colleagues, unless special circumstances are identified and other arrangements agreed. It is not however, unlawful for an apprentice to have different or lesser employment benefits than that of regular employees i.e. pension, healthcare arrangements, gym membership.

Q. What hours is my apprentice(s) permitted to work?

A. Apprentices must be offered a minimum of 30 hours work per week to complete their apprenticeship (including any time spent on 'off the job' training). However, the majority of apprentices work full-time.

If an apprentice is under 18 years of age but over school leaving age 'Young Worker' regulations apply to their working hours. These state that young workers may not normally work more than 8 hours a day and no more than 40 hours per week. These hours cannot be averaged out. For more information on Young Worker regulations please refer to <http://www.direct.gov.uk>

Aspects of employment such as working hours and break times are determined between you as the employer and your apprentice(s) adhering to the above.

If any weekend or evening work is required, or any trips off site (including residential courses), apprentices under the age of 18 must gain written consent from their parent/guardian.

Q. How much should my apprentice be paid?

- A.** From 1st October 2014, the National Minimum Wage for apprentices will go up 5p from £2.68 to £2.73, although many employers tend to pay more than this.

This rate is for apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over that are in their first year.

All other apprentices are entitled to the National Minimum Wage for their age.

If after completing 12 months of apprenticeship training your apprentice has reached age 19 (or over), they are then eligible to receive the National Minimum wage for their age group.

(Your business is free to pay any amount over the minimum wage which many employers do, however this is at your discretion)

Any time an apprentice spends training as a part of their apprenticeship (i.e. at a training centre or college), must be paid at the same rate they receive for time spent in work.

Q. What should I do if my apprentice is absent from work?

- A.** Your training provider is required to maintain records of any absences therefore, if your apprentice is absent from work you must inform them.

If your apprentice has 4 weeks or more continuous non-attendance (due to sickness, maternity/paternity leave, religious observance etc) withdrawal from training procedures apply.

This will include establishing if the apprentice has a genuine intention to return to training.

Q. How are my apprentice's aims and progress documented and monitored?

- A.** Each apprentice must have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) prepared by the learning provider and the contents reviewed and agreed by the apprentice and employer. All parties are required to sign to confirm their agreement.

The plan will detail the main elements and duration of training; location of 'on' and 'off' the job training; qualification and level being undertaken; and eligibility for funding. Your provider is required to update the ILP to reflect any changes that occur during the course of the apprenticeship.

Effective monitoring and review of progress must take place. This will depend on the type of apprenticeship and may be as little as monthly or up to a quarterly basis but will include, as a minimum, a formal report that will be documented and signed by the apprentice, monitoring/training officer, and your nominated work place supervisor. A hard copy of every review will be given to the apprentice and the supervisor.

Q. Are there any guidelines for dealing with poor performance?

- A.** Poor performance should of course be addressed and it is essential that all apprentices receive regular constructive feedback and clear guidance on areas for improvement.

It is however, very important to consider that apprentices are usually inexperienced individuals (which is reflected in their salary) and therefore, on occasions will need extra support, guidance and patience than would be expected for a regular employee.

Training provider staff are always willing to give advice and support on these matters. If appropriate, apprentices should be subject to the same discipline and grievance procedures as other members of your organisation.

Q. What happens once my apprentice(s) completes their apprenticeship training?

- A.** If you wish to employ an apprentice as a full time member of staff once their apprenticeship training is complete, normal employment rules apply including National Minimum Wage.

If, however, it is not your intention to retain the apprentice, it is anticipated that you as the employer and your training provider will give the individual all relevant support to find new employment, including time off for attending interviews.

Q. How long should an apprenticeship last?

- A.** An apprenticeship must last at least 12 months in duration, particularly where a learner is aged 16–18 but they can last for up to four years dependent upon the level you wish your apprentice to work towards.

Q. Which apprenticeship is suitable for my business?

- A.** Apprenticeships are currently delivered through frameworks.

There may be one or more that could be suitable to you and it is recommended that you spend some time with your training provider as part of the selection process going through the various elements of the framework so that you are certain and happy that you have got the right one. Please note, this might take time but the more time you invest at the start the better chance you have of getting it right later on.

Training providers will be able to provide you with a breakdown of the framework(s) into units. This is really important as you are then able to see for yourself the content and what you can offer as part of the on the job contribution. It also helps to ascertain how the training programme will be delivered to you and helps determine what type of apprenticeship recruitment you might need.

Training

and assessment of the apprentice

There are 3 key ingredients to training and assessment of an apprentice;

1. The apprentice
2. You the employer, and
3. The training provider

It is important to remember that an apprentice in the majority of cases would not have had experience of a professional working environment before, therefore they will probably need additional guidance and support to understand their role, the tasks they will be expected to carry out and how they fit into your organisation.

Your apprentice(s) will need an introduction to your company which should include; health and safety training; an introduction and briefing on your company policies and procedures; any expectations you have of them including behaviour, dress code etc.

In addition, there is the on-going training you will be expected to give to your apprentice as you would any other employee.

We also recommend a designated supervisor who is the person responsible for day to day involvement with the apprentice and act as a key contact.

The fundamentals

The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) forms the basis of the training plan that will be undertaken with you or your supervisor and the apprentice and the training provider.

It details the who, where and when of training your apprentice. Training will take place in the workplace as well as at the college and is recorded in the ILP and will detail who is responsible for training the apprentice.

Our experience shows that each work place varies and the training is tempered accordingly.

Progress is reviewed at intervals with you, the apprentice and the training provider and is normally quarterly. Support is available through additional visits or over the telephone.

All training and assessment staff will have industry relevant skills and experience to support you and your apprentice as part of the package.

Get involved

Your time is appreciated with any additional work that you do in relation to having an apprentice, be it recommending them for an award, to attending employer forums.

Employer forums

Employer forums have been established with certain training providers as a way of helping them to understand you as an employer and what your needs are. They want you to get involved and help them to develop partnerships that shape the curriculum so that it is relevant and meets your business needs.

Celebrating your success

There are some great opportunities to promote your business and showcase you and your apprentice.

Many training providers hold graduation ceremonies each year to celebrate the achievement of learners, apprentices and their employers

National Apprenticeship of the Year Awards

This is run by the National Apprenticeship Service and there are regional and national stages to this.

Financial support: funding

There are two grants directly available for helping with costs of having an apprentice from national and local sources:

1. Apprenticeship Grants for Employers (AGE grants) of up to £1500 are available for employers who recruit a new apprentice aged between 16 and 24 years of age.
2. If your business employs fewer than 50 employees then you will be eligible for up to 5 grants to support your apprenticeships. Please see the link below for further information:

<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Partners/Policy/Appfav.ico>

Do I have to pay anything towards training costs for the apprenticeship?

The table below shows what funding can support the apprenticeship

Age	Funding available
16–18	Yes – 100%
19–24	Yes – up to 50% employer contribution required
24+	No – employer contributions required

This is in addition to the AGE grant.

Also, from April 2015, employers will not have to pay National Insurance Contributions (NICs) for workers aged between 18 and 21. Check Gov.uk for further details.

Business

toolkit

Selection of training: what you should look for from a training provider, useful tips

- How they will help and support you with recruitment and selection;
- Help and support with “red tape”;
- The general approach and standards of customer service (how do they compare to your own);
- The quality of the training offered and their quality standards as well as Ofsted grade (good or outstanding)
- The quality of the apprentice referral for interview and selection
- What is the added value they can offer you as part of the process and service
- How the training offer is tailored to your business and organisational needs (it is based on your demands, not what is supplied without alteration.
- The history of delivery in the apprenticeship you are wanting;
- Can you get involved in the training yourself if you want to.

The interview

When interviewing apprentice candidates, it's useful to bear in mind that they might not have much professional experience. Therefore, the questions need to be tailored to finding out about their personal achievements.

You may well have your own but detailed below are a few tried and tested examples;

1. Why have you applied for this apprenticeship?
2. What do you think we want from our apprentice?
3. Apprenticeships mean working full time alongside studying for a qualification. How will you prioritise your workload?
4. Give an example of a time you have worked independently.
5. Give an example of a time you have worked as part of a team.
6. Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
7. Have you got any questions for us?

Source: Apprenticeship Eye

Induction checklist

It's your apprentice's first day at your company. They might be nervous, understandably. Many apprentices tend to be of school leaving age, so this might well be their first time in a working environment.

You've invested in this person. Their CV was at the top of the pile and they beat others during the interview process. The last thing you want is for them to feel uncomfortable, or unsupported, and then leave before completing their apprenticeship.

The first week is therefore, very important. You should take steps to integrate the apprentice fully into your company by getting to know them, giving them tasks relevant to their post, and providing on-going support.

Set significant, meaningful tasks which they can get stuck in to and ensure that they feel able to ask any questions if they run into trouble. Appoint a mentor who can act as the first point of contact for the apprentice. Perhaps they were an apprentice themselves who has stayed with the company.

Above all, be supportive and set clear targets that the apprentice can work towards. Hold regular meetings to discuss the apprentice's progress and find out how they are getting on. This way, you will ensure that the apprentice feels comfortable which will ultimately increase loyalty and lessen the chance of them abandoning ship.

We have developed an induction checklist that you can use for your company induction.

Area	Completed
Welcome	
Company information and background	
Your role and why we wanted you	
Key members of staff roles and responsibilities	
Your supervisor/mentor	
Other apprentices?	
Holidays, pay, perks and benefits	
Sickness and absence; what to do	
Health and Safety; your responsibilities	
Reporting accidents/PPE/tools and equipment	
Disciplinary procedures	
Union membership	
Signed	Date:
Signed	Date:

Mentoring

77% of businesses report that having a mentor programme improves job performance and helps staff (and apprenticeship) retention.

You should provide support to the apprentice throughout their time with the company. Make clear the goals you expect of them.

Be patient and willing to answer any questions the apprentice may have to assist their learning.

Choose a mentor who has had similar experiences to the apprentice; perhaps they once were an apprentice themselves.

Mentors will be on hand to offer the apprentice advice and information, and to work closely with both employer and apprentice to solve any problems which might hinder the apprentice's learning.

Mentoring is especially important for young apprentices as it likely to be their first time in a working environment .

A mentor should typically be able to:

- Listen actively and give constructive feedback
- Build rapport easily
- Set realistic targets
- Offer support and guidance
- Be a good role model

There is a wealth of literature on the subject of mentoring and it may not be for everyone in your workforce. If you are interested in developing your skills as a mentor talk to your training provider about possible courses and training available.

