

## **Employer Q&As**

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Here are a range of questions and answers regarding the Apprenticeships.

### **General**

#### **What do we do to find out more?**

The National Apprenticeship Service has all the information you need to start an Apprenticeship.

The National Apprenticeship Service website is your one stop shop for all the information you need about how to get started with taking on an apprentice.

#### **What if I can't find an Apprenticeship for my sector?**

So far, over 190 types of Apprenticeships are available – and more are being developed. They have all been developed with employers and Sector Skills Councils to ensure they meet the needs of employers.

Apprenticeships are also available for a number of business support functions including business administration and finance. A full list of available Apprenticeships can be [accessed here](#).

#### **What does it involve?**

An Apprenticeship includes the following components:

- A minimum of 16 hours per week paid employment.
- A knowledge based element.
- A competency based element.
- Transferable or “key skills”.
- A module on employment rights and responsibilities.

#### **What is an Apprenticeship?**

Apprenticeships refer to on-the-job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications, developed by industry.

The National Apprenticeship Service supports, funds and co-ordinates the delivery of Apprenticeships throughout the UK.

#### **How long does it take?**

The length of an Apprenticeship varies depending on prior skills levels of the apprentice, the qualification being obtained and industry sector. Generally, Apprenticeships take between one and three years to complete.

#### **How are Apprenticeships different to Modern Apprenticeships?**

They are one and the same thing - Modern Apprenticeships were re-branded in 2004 to 'Apprenticeships'.

#### **Is there an upper age limit for Apprenticeships?**

No.

#### **Is anything being done to help SMEs take on an apprentice?**

Like any other business, SMEs can benefit from taking on apprentices.

The National Apprenticeship Service is piloting a number of programmes to explore how the government's support can be enhanced, taking into account the unique cost pressures that SMEs face.

### **Business Benefits**

### **What evidence is there that hiring an apprentice is good for my business?**

The Learning and Skills Council recently surveyed businesses throughout the UK on benefits of hiring an apprentice (Populus, January 2009). Of those surveyed:

- 81% said that employing apprentices generated higher overall productivity for their company.
- 66% said that their Apprenticeship programme made them more competitive in their industry.
- 92% said that their Apprenticeship programme better motivated staff and increased job satisfaction.
- 74% said that apprentices tended to be more loyal, remaining at their company longer than non-apprentices.

### **My business is struggling to make ends meet as it is with the recession. How is taking on an apprentice going to help my businesses manage through it?**

Even in difficult times like these, Apprenticeships are a vital way of improving the skills of staff and generating a committed and valuable workforce. When times are tough, competition for contracts is even tougher. That's when a well-trained, extra pair of hands could make a real difference to your chances of success.

Apprentices can also help you ready your businesses for when the economy comes out of recession. By offering a flexible resource that can help your business grow, apprentices can also give you a competitive advantage to exploit new business growth opportunities.

### **Why would I want to take on an apprentice?**

Because it is good business. Skills shortages are still one of the biggest threats to UK business. Apprenticeships can help businesses across all industries by offering a route to harness fresh talent. If you have trained staff with the right skills for the job they can do a wider range of tasks and take on new responsibilities - this can help to reduce skill shortages, minimise staff turnover and workplace accidents, and increase productivity.

Taking on an apprentice is cost effective because your people can learn while they're on the job and the government contributes to the costs of learning.

### **Yes, but what is the financial benefit to me?**

There are clear financial benefits to employers and their investment in Apprenticeships is repaid many times over.

A recent study by the University of Warwick Institute of Employment Research found that the costs of Apprenticeship training are recouped relatively quickly, and that where the investment is nurtured, the returns are significant.

Another study by Sheffield University measured the long term financial benefit to investing in Apprenticeships. A Level 3 Advanced apprentice will generate an additional lifetime benefit to themselves and their employer of £105,000 compared to someone who does not gain an Apprenticeship. The Level 2 additional benefit is £73,000. This represents a gain of £16 for every £1 of taxpayers' money.

### **Do I receive any monetary incentives to take on an apprentice?**

Employers do not receive a direct monetary incentive to take on apprentices. However, the off-job training costs are subsidised in full, or in part, by the National Apprenticeship Service.

## **Types of Apprenticeships**

### **What types of Apprenticeships are there?**

There are more than 190 job roles available for apprentices ranging from accountancy to textiles, engineering to veterinary nursing, business administration to construction.

They generally fall into one of three categories:

- 'Apprenticeships' equivalent to Level 2 (or GCSE level).

- 'Advanced Apprenticeships' equivalent to Level 3 (or A-levels).
- 'Higher Apprenticeships' – the equivalent to a foundation degree.

### **Which Apprenticeships are most in demand?**

Some of the most popular Apprenticeships at present are: Engineering, Business Administration, Construction and Hospitality.

### **How are Apprenticeships frameworks developed?**

An Apprenticeship is essentially a set of qualifications called a 'framework'. These are developed by Sector Skills Councils. Sector Skills Councils are licensed by government to work with employers to develop National Occupational Standards and design Apprenticeship frameworks for the industries they represent.

## **Costs and Funding**

### **So what support can I expect from the National Apprenticeship Service?**

The National Apprenticeship Service covers the training of apprentices depending on their age.

<b>Age</b>	<b>National Apprenticeship Service contribution</b>
16 -18	100%
19 - 24	50%
25 +	Contribution for specified places

The government provides the funds to cover the full cost of the mandatory training required to complete the framework as determined by the relevant SSC for a young person aged 16-18 on an Apprenticeship. If employers or providers choose to deliver additional qualifications or courses as part of the delivery of the overall framework then these courses will not be funded and will need to be paid for by the provider or employer.

We also support employers through the process of recruiting and training a candidate, including signposting them to providers and advising on the Apprenticeship frameworks available. The National Apprenticeship Service also manages Apprenticeships vacancies - a free online recruitment tool that can be used to match apprentices with prospective employers.

### **Is there a cost for employers?**

Like all employees, apprentices must still receive a wage. The minimum wage for apprentices is £95 a week. However, as skills develop, many employers tend to increase wages – in fact, research has found that apprentices earn an average of £170 net pay per week.

There is also the cost of the supervision, support and mentoring that you will need to put in place to support the apprentice. These associated costs are not insignificant - however, the National Apprenticeship Service will match employer's commitment to hiring apprentices by covering in full, or in part, the training costs.

## **Training and Employment**

### **How often do apprentices attend college or training sessions?**

This varies from programme to programme. Some of the training can be in the work place and other sessions could be in college or with a learning provider. Depending on the type of job being done, or the elements of training being undertaken, it could be one day a week or a block release.

### **I have an employee keen to do an apprenticeship. Can I still take them on as an apprentice?**

Yes.

### **Do I have to give my apprentice holidays?**

Like most other employees, apprentices must be given at least 20 days' paid holiday per year as well as bank holidays.

### **What are the minimum and maximum work hours for an Apprentice?**

An Apprentice must be offered a minimum of 16 hours of work per week to complete their apprenticeship. Generally, however, most Apprentices are employed full time.

Aspects of the employment agreement like how many hours an Apprentice is expected to work and what breaks they are entitled to is determined by the employer and the Apprentice.

### **Is there a limit to the number of apprentices that an employer can take on?**

No they can take on as many as they need – and often in more than one framework. The employer will be responsible for giving the apprentice an induction into their role as they provide on-the-job training.

### **Do apprentices pay tax and national insurance?**

As is the case of all employees aged over 16, apprentices must still pay tax and national insurance on their income.

### **What are transferable skills?**

Many different industry sectors share the same skill sets. These core skills are transferable across sectors and are built into the Apprenticeship to maximise flexibility and choice for employers and apprentices. They include:

- Communication (mandatory).
- Application of numbers (mandatory).
- ICT.
- Working with others.
- Improving own learning and performance.
- Problem solving.

### **Do apprentices take exams?**

Most assessment is carried out in the workplace but there may be a requirement to take some tests.

### **Are Apprentices eligible for maternity leave?**

Yes. Like all employees, apprentices are entitled to statutory Maternity Leave of 52 weeks with statutory Maternity Pay for up to 39 weeks.

### **Does my apprentice have to work full-time?**

No, however they must work an average of 16 hours or more per week.

### **What's the role of learning providers?**

A learning provider is usually a local college or specialist training organisation responsible for an apprentice's off-the-job training. When you take on an apprentice they will appoint a mentor who will work with you to make sure that the training is well planned. Once the apprentice begins the mentor will follow their progress and deal with any issues that may arise.

### **What are my responsibilities as the employer?**

You must give your apprentice an induction into their role and provide on-the-job training. As with all employees, you are also responsible for the wages of your apprentice.

## **Programme-Led Apprenticeships**

### **Are Apprentices on a Programme-Led Apprenticeship paid?**

No. However, apprentices on this scheme are treated as students of further education and are therefore eligible for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) funding of up to a maximum of £30 per week, depending on parental income.

As with full Apprenticeships, the National Apprenticeship Service funds the training and assessment costs for apprentices on the Programme-Led Apprenticeships scheme.

### **What is a Programme-Led Apprenticeship?**

Programme-Led Apprenticeships are a way for people start their apprenticeship qualification without being in full-time employment. They also enable employers who may not be able to support apprentices through a whole apprenticeship framework to offer training opportunities.

With Programme-Led Apprenticeships, apprentices can begin studying parts of the Apprenticeship framework at a learning provider until a suitable employer is