

# APPRENTICESHIPS WORK

**Getting started with  
apprenticeships: A guide for  
small businesses**

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# Quick start



# Why apprenticeships?

## Why are apprenticeships a great option?

Apprenticeships are a fantastic option for employers to consider, whether recruiting a new member of staff, or thinking about upskilling an existing employee. You will be able to work with your apprenticeship training provider to adapt the programme according to the needs of your business, helping you to provide appropriate training for your workforce.

### What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a way for individuals to gain qualifications and experience, whilst working alongside your other employees.

### How does the training work?

Each apprenticeship standard now has a set minimum of off-the-job training hours, set by the government. The rest of the apprentice's time is spent in the workplace, performing their job role and learning from the expertise of the colleagues around them. Your training provider will be able to advise you on the different delivery models that are available, and how the off-the-job training hours will be calculated and delivered.

### What qualification will they achieve?

Most apprenticeships contain a mix of qualifications and skills, which could also include English and maths, if required. On successful completion, the apprentice will receive an overall 'Apprenticeship Certificate'.

### How does the government help?

The government provides both financial assistance and support services to employers (see pages 6 and 7).

## Fast facts

- Apprenticeships can be suitable for anyone aged 16+ and there is no upper age limit.
- There are different levels of apprenticeship ranging from foundation to degree level.
- The apprentice must be employed and have a contract of employment.
- The minimum duration of an apprenticeship is 8 months, depending on prior experience and qualifications.
- Many apprenticeships are full-time, but part-time flexibilities are available.
- Employers do not pay National Insurance Contributions for apprentices aged 16-24 on earnings below the higher tax rate.

# How much will it cost?

## Deciding the salary and benefits

When recruiting an apprentice, employers are able to decide how much they pay, so long as it complies with the National Minimum Wage requirements for the individual. This means employers are able to put together a package of salary and benefits that they feel will be attractive and affordable.

### What should we pay an apprentice?

Establishing your apprentice's starting salary is an important decision for any employer. The salary will be a key part of the overall package that you offer, but you can also consider the other ways to make your position attractive to potential candidates.

### How can we benchmark our salary?

You could undertake some research into other apprenticeship vacancies:

- Take a look at the vacancy platform 'Find an apprenticeship' to see the salary and benefits that other employers are offering:  
[Gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](https://gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)
- Speak to your training provider about previous positions that they have helped employers to advertise and to share what worked well.

## National Minimum Wage for Apprentices (NMWA)



The government sets a minimum wage for apprentices each year, based on age and their year of study. More information can be found here: [gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates](https://gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates)

### Should we pay higher than the minimum wage?

While the National Minimum Wage for Apprentices (NMWA) is the legal minimum, many employers offer higher pay to align with their wider workforce roles and to stay competitive.

## Investment

### Apprentice salary

plus any oncosts e.g. Pension and National Insurance (if eligible). Remember - employers do not pay NICs for apprentices aged under 25 years.



### Training costs

will depend on the age of the apprentice and size of your business (see next page).



### Your time

and the time of your colleagues to support the development of the apprentice.

# How much will it cost?

## How does funding for apprenticeship training work?

There are different ways that apprenticeship funding works, depending on the size of your business and the age of the apprentice. All employers with an annual paybill in excess of £3 million will pay the 'Apprenticeship Levy'. Further guidance about the levy is available here: [gov.uk/guidance/pay-apprenticeship-levy](https://gov.uk/guidance/pay-apprenticeship-levy).

**For employers that do not pay the apprenticeship levy, the cost of the apprenticeship training will depend on the age of your apprentice (either 100% funded, or 5% co-investment) as set out below. Levy-paying employers who exhaust their funds will now pay a 25% co-investment rate for apprentices aged 25+.**

### Apprentices aged 16-24

If you employ an apprentice aged 16-24, from August 2026, the costs of the training will be 100% funded by the government. You will still be required to pay the salary and other on-costs (see page 5).

### Apprentices aged 25+

If a non-levy employer starts an apprentice aged 25+, you will pay 5% of the training costs, and the government will pay the remaining 95% of the training costs. A worked example has been provided below.

## Levy transfer

→ Employers may benefit from levy transfer, where employers with unused levy funds can 'gift' their levy to another employer, which will cover 100% of the training costs. Your training provider will be able to connect you with levy-paying organisations and/or levy transfer programmes.

You could also contact the Apprenticeship Hub Network to find out about local brokerage services (see page 15).

### EXAMPLE

#### Apprentice aged 25+

Apprentice is studying a Business Administration Level 3 (Advanced) apprenticeship. The maximum funding band for this is £5,000.

As the employer, you would be required to pay 5% of the training costs = £250

The Government would pay the remaining 95% = £4,750

Or alternatively, you could access levy transfer.

# Government incentives

## Does the government provide any financial assistance?

The Government offers different financial incentives to businesses employing an apprentice, depending on the age and level of the apprentice.

### **£1,000** Government incentive

- Employers and training providers could receive £1,000 each for taking on an apprentice who is either:
  - aged 16 to 18 years old, or
  - aged 19 to 24 years old and has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or has been in the care of their local authority.
- You can use the £1,000 towards the cost of the salary, or to support your apprentice, covering costs of travel or a bonus for achievements.
- The £1,000 incentive is paid in two parts:
  - £500 after 90 days, and
  - £500 after 365 days of the apprenticeship.

### **£2,000** Foundation apprenticeships

- Employers offering Foundation apprenticeships can receive a £2,000 government incentive.
- Foundation Apprenticeships are level 2 programmes for young people aged 16–21, and those aged 22–24 if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan, are a care leaver, are in prison or recently released.
- The incentive is paid in three instalments:
  - 90 days (£667),
  - 242 days (£667).
  - The remaining instalment (£666) is paid if the individual starts a new apprenticeship within 6 months of their completion date and remains with the same employer.

### **£3,000** Care Leavers' Bursary

- Care-experienced individuals aged 16-24 could be eligible for an additional £3,000 bursary, paid by the government, tax free, in addition to their salary.  
[amapps.uk/care-leavers-bursary](https://amapps.uk/care-leavers-bursary)

#### Other incentives

At times, local or sector-specific incentives (such as the Construction Industry Training Board) may be available. Please ask your training provider for details.

# Government incentives

## The government has announced a series of further incentives:

A range of funded programmes and incentives have been introduced to help employers benefit from meaningful opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24.

### **£2,000** Non-levy incentive

- ➔ From October 2026, employers that do not pay the apprenticeship levy could receive up to £2,000 for hiring an apprentice aged 16 to 24.
- ➔ You can use the £2,000 towards the cost of the salary, or to support your apprentice, covering costs of travel or a bonus for achievements.
- ➔ The £2,000 incentive is paid in two parts:
  - £1,000 after 90 days, and
  - £1,000 after 365 days of the apprenticeship.

### **£3,000** Youth Jobs Grant

- ➔ The Youth Jobs Grant gives your business (any size) £3,000 for every person aged 18 to 24 you take on across Great Britain who has been on Universal Credit and looking for work for six months or more.
- ➔ You will need to register your interest with the Department for Work and Pensions. Complete the [online enquiry form](#) (scan the QR code below) and select 'Youth Jobs Grant'. Someone from the Jobs and Careers Service will then be in touch to support you.



## Jobs Guarantee

- ➔ From Autumn 2026, the government will provide financial support with wraparound support to employers taking on those aged 18 to 24 who have been claiming Universal Credit for 18 months. Employers will be reimbursed for 25 hours per week at the age relevant National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage for 6 months. It also includes National Insurance Contributions and minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions.

# Selecting the standard

## Which apprenticeship standard is right for us?

With nearly 700 apprenticeship standards to pick from, you've got a lot of choice. Ultimately, selecting the most suitable apprenticeship will depend on the job role of the apprentice that you are considering, and their prior experience and qualifications.

### What is an apprenticeship standard?

Apprenticeship standards set out what an apprentice will be doing and the skills required of them, by job role. They have been developed by groups of employers, working alongside government officials.

An apprenticeship standard is essentially the job role that the apprentice will be training for. The knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out within the standard are tailored specifically to ensure that the apprentice succeeds within that job role.

There are nearly 700 approved apprenticeship standards to select from covering around 1,700 job roles and ranging from level 2 through to level 7.

## Which standard?

### How do I know which standard is the best one for us?

There are a few different ways that you can start narrowing down the options. A good place to start is through the Skills England website (please see the next page).

### Advice from your training provider

You may already have a training provider that you are working with, and they will be able to advise you on the different apprenticeship standards and levels.

You could also speak to another business, ask about the apprenticeships that they offer and see if they can share any suggestions.

### What tasks will the apprentice be doing?

Whether an existing member of staff, or a new recruit, working through the key tasks that the individual will be performing in their role is a really useful way to ensure that you can find the most suitable apprenticeship standard. You could use a job description and/or person specification to help structure the role.

## Restrictions

There are certain apprenticeship standards that have age restrictions for funding e.g. 16-24. Your training provider will be able to advise you.

# Selecting the standard

## How can we see the full range of apprenticeship standards available?

Visit the Skills England website to view the full range of apprenticeship standards:

[skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships)

The Skills England website contains a directory of all apprenticeship standards that are available for delivery, and also those that are in development. It can be a useful place to start as you may find apprenticeship standards that are better suited to the job role than perhaps you had previously considered.

## Skills England filters explained

### Keywords

There is a helpful 'Keyword' search function where you can type in words or key phrases to see which apprenticeship standard could be suitable.

### Routes (sectors)

You can select particular sectors and this will bring up a range of apprenticeship standards that could typically be linked to roles in those industries.

### Status

Apprenticeships approved for delivery are those that are currently available.

### Apprenticeship Level

The apprenticeship levels range from 2 (foundation and intermediate) through to 7 (master's).

### Can't find what you're looking for?

If you can't find what you're looking for, try adjusting your search terms or broaden your search by removing some of the filters.

The screenshot shows the Skills England Apprenticeship Finder interface. On the left, there are several filter sections: 'Keywords' with a search bar, 'Apprenticeship type' with checkboxes for 'Apprenticeship standard' and 'Foundation apprenticeship', 'Route(s)' with a list of sectors like 'Agriculture, environmental and animal care', 'Creative and design', etc., 'Status' with checkboxes for 'Standards approved for delivery (available for starts)', 'Standards in development', etc., 'Apprenticeship Level' with checkboxes for levels 2 through 7, and 'Versions' with a checkbox for 'Show all versions'. On the right, there are 'Update: Policy change' and 'Previous update' notices. Below these, there's a 'Sort' dropdown set to 'Alphabetically' and a 'Download a list of apprenticeships' button. The main list shows several apprenticeship standards, including 'Aerospace engineering technician', 'Teacher - Undergraduate', 'Advanced paralegal', 'Insulation installation operative', 'Floorlayer wood based', 'Water industry asset maintenance technician', and 'Engineering maintenance technician - dual discipline'. Each entry includes details like approval date, level, duration, max funding, and a brief description.

# Apprenticeship units

## What are apprenticeship units?

In April 2026, the government introduced new ‘apprenticeship units’, designed to create flexible upskilling options linked to priority sectors for those who are already in employment.

### How do they work?

Apprenticeship units provide short, targeted training for individuals already in employment. They are for those aged 19 and above, and not currently undertaking an apprenticeship.

Units are shorter courses and will range between 30 and 140 hours. They can be delivered over 1 to 16 weeks by a certain number of approved training providers.

### Which training providers can offer apprenticeship units?

Only approved training providers can offer apprenticeship units. The government has an online portal to assist employers to find a training provider (see page 13).

### How are apprenticeship units funded?

#### Non-levy paying employers:

- Apprenticeship units are fully funded for all individuals aged 19+.

#### Levy-paying employers

- Levy paying employers can use their levy funds to pay for apprenticeship units.
- When account funds are exhausted, if the learner is aged 19-24, they will be fully funded, or for those aged 25+, they will move into co-investment (25% contribution).

## Apprenticeship Units

Ten apprenticeship units are currently available. You can visit the Skills England website to view the latest list of available units, the content and assessment requirements:

[skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/?types=ApprenticeshipUnit](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/?types=ApprenticeshipUnit)

- AI strategy and opportunity
- AI adoption, procurement and governance
- AI delivery and organisational transformation
- Battery manufacturing
- Solar PV installation and maintenance
- Electric vehicle (EV) charging point installation and maintenance
- Electrical fitting and assembly
- Welding (mechanised)
- Mechanical fitting and assembly
- Permanent modular building assembly

# Finding a training provider

## How do we select a training provider?

If you are not already working with a training provider, you will need to research which providers offer the apprenticeship standard that you would like to use (see page 10). You will then need to select the apprenticeship training provider you want to work with.

### Finding a training provider

#### **You already know your provider**

You may have a relationship with a training provider if they are currently or have previously supported your business.

#### **Local providers**

Many employers will start by contacting providers in their local area. Find out if you have a Local Training Provider Network by contacting your local Chamber of Commerce, who may have a list of providers.

#### **Ask your contacts**

You could speak to other employers about the apprenticeship providers that they use. They will be able to share their experiences and possibly make some recommendations.

#### **Use 'Find a training provider'**

See the next page.

### **What is a training provider?**

An apprenticeship training provider works with employers and the apprentice to help plan the overall apprenticeship, and to deliver the off-the-job learning that will help your apprentice to develop new skills and gain valuable workplace experience.

### **Who can be a training provider?**

All apprenticeship providers must be approved to be able to offer apprenticeships. Approved providers will then be able to receive government funding.

### **Are there different types of training providers?**

Yes, there are different types of training providers, which could include:

- Independent Training Providers (ITPs)
- Further Education Colleges
- Universities
- Employer Providers

Take time to research and find the provider that will best meet the needs of your business. Many providers now work nationally and will offer online / flexible learning as well as classroom based learning.

# Finding a training provider

## Using the 'Finding a training provider' service

The government has developed an online portal to assist employers to find a training provider [gov.uk/employers-find-apprenticeship-training](https://gov.uk/employers-find-apprenticeship-training)

As you move through the sections of the portal, you will be able to narrow down providers based on:

- The course (apprenticeship standard) you would like them to follow.
- The apprentice's work location and how far they can travel.
- The type of delivery model you're looking for e.g. at the workplace / day release / block release.
- Employer and apprentice reviews.
- Course achievement rates.

You will also be able to:

- Read an overview (description) of the provider.
- Access their contact details (email, telephone and website).
- See which other courses they offer.
- Add them to a shortlist.

## Apprenticeship training courses

Select the course name to view details about it, or select view training providers to see the training providers who run that course.

| Filter                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 826 results                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Sorted by: Name of course |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <div>Apply filter</div> <div><b>Course</b><br/>Enter course, job or standard<br/><input type="text"/></div> <div><b>Apprentice's work location</b><br/>Enter city or postcode<br/><input type="text"/></div> <div><b>Apprentice can travel</b><br/>Distance apprentice can travel<br/><input type="text" value="10 miles"/></div> <div><b>Apprenticeship type</b><br/><a href="#">Show</a></div> <div><b>Apprenticeship level</b><br/><a href="#">Show</a></div> <div><b>Job categories</b><br/><a href="#">Show</a></div> <div>Apply filter</div> | <div><b>Abattoir worker (level 2)</b><br/>Managing animals before and during the slaughtering process.<br/>Level: 2 - equal to GCSE<br/>Type: Apprenticeship<br/>Job category: Engineering and manufacturing<br/>Duration: 16 months<br/>Maximum funding from government: £6,000<br/><a href="#">View 2 training providers for this course</a></div> <div><b>Academic professional (level 7)</b><br/>Working within the higher education (HE) sector delivering higher education teaching<br/>Level: 7 - equal to master's degree<br/>Type: Apprenticeship<br/>Job category: Education and early years<br/>Duration: 18 months<br/>Maximum funding from government: £9,000<br/><a href="#">View 16 training providers for this course</a></div> <div><b>Accident repair technician (level 3)</b><br/>Mending damaged vehicles using a range of metalworking and finishing techniques.<br/>Level: 3 - equal to A level<br/>Type: Apprenticeship<br/>Job category: Engineering and manufacturing<br/>Duration: 24 months<br/>Maximum funding from government: £12,000<br/><a href="#">View 9 training providers for this course</a></div> <div><b>Accountancy or taxation professional (level 7)</b><br/>Providing financial information and advice to different organisations.<br/>Level: 7 - equal to master's degree<br/>Type: Apprenticeship<br/>Job category: Legal, finance and accounting<br/>Duration: 36 months</div> |                           |

# Setting up your apprenticeship account

## All employers will need to create an apprenticeship service account

Your apprenticeship account will be used to access and administer all apprenticeship funding and is a mandatory part of the apprenticeship process. You can view further guidance about setting up your digital account here:

[gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds](https://gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds)

## Reserving funding

### Why is there a reservation system?

This reservation systems helps the government in forecasting and managing the availability of funding.

### What you will need to get started

Before setting up your apprenticeship service account

You will need:

- A GOV.UK One Login account linked to an email address you use for work - you can create this at the same time as creating your apprenticeship service account.
- The Government Gateway login for your organisation (or you can use the accounts office reference number and employer PAYE scheme reference number if your annual pay bill is less than £3 million).
- Authority to add PAYE schemes to the account and accept the employer agreement on behalf of your organisation.

### Reserving apprenticeship funding

As a smaller employer, you will need to reserve funds in your apprenticeship service account before starting an apprentice. You can also give your training provider permission to reserve funds on your behalf. You will need to know:

- Which apprenticeship training course the apprentice will be doing.
- What month the apprenticeship training will start.

Before the apprentice starts their training, you can change the apprenticeship start date and training course.

### The reservation period

Funds can be reserved for 3 months before the apprenticeship is planned to start. Levy transfer (see page 6) is not included when counting reservations.

# Support for businesses

## The National Apprenticeship Hub Network (NAHN)

The NAHN comprises around 25 organisations, services and projects providing free and impartial information, advice and guidance to businesses, predominantly SMEs, to champion and stimulate the growth of apprenticeships in their local area.

To find out which local support is available in your area, visit:

[Linkedin.com/company/national-apprenticeship-hub-network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-apprenticeship-hub-network)



## The Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN)

Connect with employers who have already established their apprenticeship programmes. You can share stories, ask for advice and develop best practice.

Check out the nine regional networks across England:

[apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/aan-regional-networks](https://apprenticeships.gov.uk/apprentices/aan-regional-networks)

**AAN**  
Apprenticeship  
Ambassador Network

# Useful links



## **Edge Foundation: Apprenticeships Work**

Apprenticeships Work is a campaign with a simple goal: to encourage more small businesses to take on apprentices. Check out the full campaign and range of resources available.

[Edge.co.uk/apprenticeships-work](https://edge.co.uk/apprenticeships-work)



## **Amazing Apprenticeships**

Amazing Apprenticeships work nationally to support employers to be aware of apprenticeships and the benefits they bring, and to help young people to access those opportunities.

[Amazingapprenticeships.com](https://amazingapprenticeships.com)



## **Gov.uk**

The Government website hosts a range of information for employers, including a guide to businesses considering apprenticeships.

[Gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice](https://gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice)



## **Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)**

The FSB have a range of resources and articles on their site, including this useful mythbusting guide to apprenticeships.

[Fsb.org.uk/resources/article/busting-seven-myths-about-apprenticeships-MC3E5LSVKW7JFFRKHIRYGGHFNMXM](https://fsb.org.uk/resources/article/busting-seven-myths-about-apprenticeships-MC3E5LSVKW7JFFRKHIRYGGHFNMXM)



**Department  
for Work &  
Pensions**

## **Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)**

The DWP are offering businesses a range of incentives and grants to increase opportunities for 18-24 year olds.

[business.gov.uk/campaign/recruit-with-jobcentreplus/build-your-future-workforce](https://business.gov.uk/campaign/recruit-with-jobcentreplus/build-your-future-workforce)

# SME stories

Click on the stories below to hear inspirational stories of SME employers and how they are using apprenticeships to grow and support their workforce.



## **The Briny Restaurant, Portsmouth**

Meet Chef de Partie apprentice James, and Head Chef Cameron as they discuss the many benefits of being an apprentice in a small business. The Briny restaurant is part of The Coastal Kitchen Family, based on the south coast of England in Portsmouth.

[amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-the-briny](https://amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-the-briny)

## **Call Systems Technology, Elstree**

This year Call Systems Technology (CST) took their first steps into apprenticeships, by employing 5 new apprentices! Hear why this has been a bold and brilliant decision for their business, why their apprentices think it's been the best move for them, and why they all value apprenticeships so highly.

[amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-film-call-systems-technology](https://amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-film-call-systems-technology)



# SME stories

Click on the stories below to hear inspirational stories of SME employers and how they are using apprenticeships to grow and support their workforce.



## RE N-GAGE, London

Take a look behind the scenes of London-based charity, Re N-GAGE, supporting young people to return to education and learning. Hear from former apprentice, Chauncey, and current apprentice, Isaac as they share why they love giving back to the charity that helped them – founded by award-winning CEO, Mags Davison.

[amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-ren-gage](https://amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-ren-gage)

## Camp Tails, Bury St Edmunds

Camp Tails is a workplace like no-other. As a small business, they have grown their team through apprenticeships, and look after more than 50 dogs each day! Meet owner Jon Kay, former apprentice Holly, and current apprentice Paris as they share why they love working in a small business.

[amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-film-camp-tails](https://amazingapprenticeships.com/resources/small-business-summer-film-camp-tails)



# SMALL BUSINESS

## *Apprenticeship Portal*



**[AMAZINGAPPRENTICESHIPS.COM/SMALL-BUSINESS-APPRENTICESHIP-PORTAL](https://AMAZINGAPPRENTICESHIPS.COM/SMALL-BUSINESS-APPRENTICESHIP-PORTAL)**

The Small Business Apprenticeship Portal makes it easier for small businesses to understand, plan and launch successful apprenticeship programmes. Whether you're looking for clear, practical information or a connection to a local brokerage hub, our free support service covers every stage of the journey.



Step-by-step  
guidance and  
expert funding  
advice



Case studies and  
up-to-date  
information



The latest  
information about  
grants and  
incentives



Webinars, guides  
and research

**Amazing Apprenticeships**  
**Amazingapprenticeships.com**

**Edge Foundation**  
**Edge.co.uk**

**@AmazingAppsUK**  
**@Edge\_Foundation**

**#SmallBusinessSummer**  
**#ApprenticeshipsWork**