



EMPLOYER'S
HANDBOOK
FOR RECRUITING AND
EMPLOYING APPRENTICES

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 apprentice 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.

From April 2017 the way the Government is funding apprenticeships in England has changed. Some large employers are now required to contribute to the apprenticeship levy, and there have been changes to the funding for apprenticeship training for all employers.

These new apprenticeships aim to:

- Give employers control in designing apprenticeships
- Increase the flexibility of delivery
- Simplify the funding system
- Increase the effectiveness of training

At West Herts College we are keeping up to date with all of the changes and advising employers on the best options for employing apprentices to suit their business needs.

The information contained within this handbook is based on established good practice and discussions with employers through an employer forum network.

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WHAT ARE APPRENTICESHIPS?

An apprenticeship is a way for young people and older members of your workforce 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 with apprenticeships – providing high quality training that benefits both apprentices and employers.

Economic benefits – 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 benefits for me

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 Disability Confident Employers, Matrix Accreditation and Investors in People, plus all are inspected by Ofsted. West Herts College is graded as an Ofsted Good College.

- 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.

Things to consider

“Red Tape”

It will not come as any surprise that there is a certain amount of red tape. However, we 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 and keep red tape to a minimum.

We 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 to recruit and train new and existing staff.

HOW DO I RECRUIT AN APPRENTICE?

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

Ensure your senior management team and business has a belief in apprenticeships and their worth, and are 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 that 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 by registering your interest in employing an apprentice with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website, 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 West Herts College as 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, both full time and vocational.

GetMyFirstJob: all of our apprenticeship opportunities are listed on GMFJ. We'll help you ensure your apprenticeship vacancy is advertised correctly.

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 an initial skills screening or 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.

WHO CAN BE AN APPRENTICE?

- Apprentices are aged over 16 and combine work and study for a suitable training programme ranging from level 2 up to degree level.
- There is no upper age limit for an apprentice.
- They can be new or current employees who need to develop substantial new skills.
- English and maths are an important part of an apprentice's learning programme. They will need to complete Functional Skills Qualifications if they don't have the requisite grades on entry. Apprentices without English or maths at level 1 must achieve this level and take the test for Level 2 English and maths before the end of the apprenticeship.
- They must work with experienced staff, have a mentor and learn job specific skills.
- They must spend 20% or more of their time in off-the-job training.
- They must be paid at least the minimum wage and have the same rights as any other employee.

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 training provider 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. A Contract of Employment is essential and their job title must include the word 'Apprentice' for a new member of staff but an existing staff member doesn't need a new contract.

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 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 they may not work more than eight hours a day and no more than 40 hours per week. These hours cannot be averaged out.

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.

Aspects of employment such as working hours and break times are determined between you as the employer and your apprentice.

Q. How much should my apprentice be paid?

A. The National Minimum Wage for apprentices is £3.70 per hour 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 the first year of their apprenticeship.

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.

For ages 18-20 the National Minimum Wage is £ 5.90, for ages 21-24 it's £7.38 and if the apprentice is 25 and over it's £7.83. Visit the Gov.org website for the latest information on the National Minimum Wage. <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

Your business is encouraged 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 long should an apprenticeship last?

A. An apprenticeship must last at least 372 days in duration from their first day in learning. They can last for up to four years dependent upon the level you wish your apprentice to work towards.

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 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. Which apprenticeship is suitable for my business?

A. New apprenticeship standards are being introduced regularly and are designed by employers and cover a single occupation. All apprenticeship standards can be found here: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

New Standards include:

- End point assessment
- A holistic element to end-point assessment
- Grading where possible
- Assessment that covers theoretical and practical elements
- No formal requirement for qualifications
- 'Mastery Mechanism' - with a single approach to assessment against the standard
- English and maths - Functional Skills
- Minimum 372 days duration
- Minimum 20% off-the-job training
- Use of technology in design, delivery and assessment

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 standards so that you are certain and happy that you have got the right one. Please note, this may take time but the more time you invest at the start the better chance you have of getting it right later on.

TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT OF THE APPRENTICE

There are three key essentials to training and assessment of an apprentice:

- 1. The apprentice**
- 2. You, the employer**
- 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 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, 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 with the training provider, is recorded in the ILP and will detail who is responsible for training the apprentice. 20% of training must take place off the job.

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 every six to eight weeks. 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 students, 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.

FUNDING

An incentive payment of £1000 is available to any employer taking on an apprentice aged 16-18 (or aged 19-24 with an Education Health and Care plan or care leaver). Payments are made via the training provider and passed on to the employer: £500 after month three and £500 after month twelve.

If you are a small business (with fewer than 50 employees) there will be no cost to you for training an apprentice aged 16-18 (or aged 19-24 with an Education Health and care plan or care leaver).

If your business has more than 50 employees you will pay only 10% of the training cost of each apprentice. Businesses of this size pay for all ages, with no remission available for 16-18 year olds.

Employers of apprentices under the age of 25 do not pay secondary Class 1 (employer) National Insurance contribution for their apprentice.

Hertfordshire Growth Hub has new incentives for Hertfordshire businesses employing 10-249 staff to take on new apprentices. Grants worth £1,500 per apprentice are available to each employer. Businesses receive the grant for up to two apprentices.

The training cost for each apprenticeship standard varies so contact the training provider for this information.

BUSINESS TOOLKIT

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

- 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 standard, as well as Ofsted grade (good or outstanding).
- The quality of the apprentice referral for interview and selection.
- What 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.
- Whether you can be involved in the training.

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 want you	
Key members of staff and responsibilities	
Your supervisor/mentor	
Other Apprentices?	
Holidays, pay, perks and benefits	
Sickness and absence: what to do	
Health and Safety: your responsibilities	
Reporting accident/PPE/tools & 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.

Apprenticeships

For further information please visit:
westherts.ac.uk/apprenticeships

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