



## Apprenticeships: guide for employers

### What is an apprenticeship?

An [apprenticeship](#) is a real job that enables individuals over the age of 16 to earn while they learn, gaining valuable knowledge, skills and behaviours tailored to a specific job role. They are available to new and existing staff who want to retrain or upskill.

Apprenticeships are available at different levels, starting from a GCSE equivalent (Level 2), up to masters degree level (Level 7). Training can last from 8 months to 6 years, depending on the level undertaken. There are hundreds of apprenticeships to choose from across 15 sectors, ranging from finance and accounting to engineering. Apprenticeships can be progression routes from other skills programmes, for example from Skills Bootcamps or T Levels.

[Foundation apprenticeships](#) are new apprenticeships for eligible 16 to 21 year olds, or 22 to 24 year olds who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan, are care leavers, are prison leavers, or are in prison. They help employers to recruit young talent through broad-based, entry-level training programmes that typically last for 8 to 12 months. They include employability skills to support the transition from education to the workplace and are available in construction and the built environment, engineering and manufacturing, digital, health and social care, catering and hospitality, and retail service, supply and administration.

### Benefits for businesses

Apprenticeships can support your business to grow talent and develop a skilled workforce. There is often fully funded apprenticeship training and assessment costs available, depending on the age of the apprentice and size of the employer.

You could also be entitled to up to [£6,000 of additional payments](#) for eligible young apprentices, with a further £2,000 available if you do not pay the levy (typically small to medium size businesses) and hire an new apprentice aged 16 to 24.

Offering an apprenticeship can:

- Introduce fresh talent and ideas to your business by recruiting new staff and upskilling existing members
- Align training to your business needs
- Boost staff loyalty and motivation

Studies show that apprenticeships lead to:

- 80% of employers reporting higher staff retention
- 92% of employers seeing a boost in workforce motivation and satisfaction

The St Martin's Group study\* on the benefits of apprenticeships found, that despite associated costs, UK employers see an average annual gain of £2,500 to £18,000 in output per apprentice during their training period. [\\*The St Martin's Group study](#)



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### Benefits of hiring a young apprentice

Young apprentices bring fresh energy and ideas to your workforce. Plus, there is extra financial support:

- **Fully funded** apprenticeships for 16 to 24 year olds
- **No employer** National Insurance contributions on eligible earnings for apprentices under 25
- **£2,000 hiring payment** for recruiting a new apprentice aged under 25 from 1 October 2026
- **£1,000 additional payment** for apprentices aged 16 to 18, or 19 to 24 if they are a care leaver or have an EHC plan
- **£2,000 incentive** for each foundation apprentice recruited
- **£3,000 Youth Jobs Grant** for young people aged 18 to 24 who have been claiming Universal Credit for six months or more

### Support for your apprentice

- **£3,000 bursary** available for eligible care leavers starting an apprenticeship
- Up to **£4,500 bursary**, targeted for households in receipt of Universal Credit

### Employer responsibilities

As an apprenticeship employer, you have a responsibility to:

- Pay at least the [minimum wage](#)
- Issue an employment contract for the duration of the apprenticeship
- Offer on-the-job training
- Provide mentoring and supervision
- Host an induction that covers business policies, procedures, and a safe working environment
- Obtain a signed apprenticeship agreement and training plan from the apprentice and the training provider, such as a local college

[Find out more about hiring an apprentice](#) for your business.

### More information

[Find out more about the Growth and Skills Levy](#) and the changes to apprenticeship funding that will be introduced from 1 August 2026.

You can also contact the apprenticeships team via email [employer.enquiries@education.gov.uk](mailto:employer.enquiries@education.gov.uk) or telephone 08000 150 400.