

# Supporting young apprentices: Guidance for employers



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National  
Apprenticeship  
Service

**L&W** LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE



# Introduction

**Young apprentices can be some of the most dedicated workers, bringing fresh perspectives and new skill sets into the workforce. They provide opportunities for employers to 'grow their own' and develop a crucial talent pipeline for businesses.**

It is important to remember that young people may not have had a formal job before and may need some additional support to settle in to the workplace and reach their potential.

This guide aims to help employers of all sizes and sectors provide effective support for apprentices aged 16 to 24. It outlines steps employers can take to make their recruitment practices accessible for young people, gives examples of on-the-job support for young apprentices in the workplace, and provides information on sources of additional funding which employers can use to support young apprentices.

## **Who was this guide created by?**

This guide was developed by Learning and Work Institute (L&W)<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the Department for Education.

L&W is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. For more information about L&W's work on apprenticeships, please contact Emily Jones at [Emily.Jones@learningandwork.org.uk](mailto:Emily.Jones@learningandwork.org.uk).

L&W would like to thank colleagues from the British Chambers of Commerce and Business in the Community who took the time to review and provide feedback on this guide.

<sup>1</sup> [www.learningandwork.org.uk](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk)

# The benefits of employing young apprentices

**Employers across different sectors report that hiring young apprentices benefits their businesses in a number of ways.**

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## **An opportunity to 'grow your own'**

Young apprentices are often new to the workplace, and this gives you a chance to instil your company's culture from the start. This can help the apprentice to quickly integrate into your way of working and gain the skills and behaviours needed to progress within the company.

*"If they come fresh and they haven't worked anywhere else, you're teaching them your way right from day one, and that's why they progress so well here, because they just become very, very important to us." (Small employer, jewellery retail sector)*

In addition, it may be easier to train an apprentice who has not picked up 'bad habits' elsewhere.

*"They are easily mouldable – because they haven't picked up bad habits from other places... They're people we can train up ourselves. Bringing new blood in really." (Large employer, local authority)*

In return for investing in their skills, research<sup>2</sup> has found that 'home grown' young apprentices tend to be loyal and are likely to stay on with their employer. As a result, you may find that young

apprentices progress through roles within your company. Over time, this saves costs on recruitment and ensures skills are kept within your workforce. It also provides you with young role models for prospective apprenticeship candidates, aiding recruitment and helping to raise the profile of your business.

*"We can just see the benefits of taking on younger apprentices and training them up because they genuinely stay on with the company." (Small employer, information technology sector)*

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## **Bringing new skills and fresh perspectives to the workplace**

Young apprentices may bring with them new skills and experiences which are missing from your workforce. This can enable them to offer fresh perspectives on your business and suggest more efficient and effective ways of delivering work.

*"We have one apprentice that works with our finance team who looked at something and said, "Why are you doing it this way? If you did it this way..." I think he saved a day's work a week by changing a few systems." (Large employer, local authority)*

<sup>2</sup> CIPD (2012) The Business Case for Employer Investment in Young People. London.

Many employers also use apprenticeships as a way of upskilling young people to meet their current and future skills needs. This can be particularly helpful for employers with an ageing workforce and those who require bespoke or specialist skills which may not be covered by a standard college course.

*“For us, the benefits are we get bright, young things that are motivated and keen to learn, and the business really likes that. It brings a new dynamic, and perspective, and energy into the business, which is great.” (Large employer, optical retail sector)*

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### Helping existing staff to develop new skills and experience

Mentoring or line managing a young person can provide opportunities for your staff to develop new skills and competencies at work<sup>3</sup>. While young apprentices can initially be labour-intensive, your staff will likely find the process of supporting a young apprentice to ‘come into their own’ rewarding.

Any mentoring or shadowing that takes place in addition to the usual working week can be counted towards the apprentice’s required 20% off the

job training. You can find out more by searching for ‘off the job training’ on gov.uk<sup>4</sup>.

You will not be alone in training your apprentices – you will work in partnership with your training provider in order to meet the needs of your apprentices.

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### Making a difference to young people’s lives

Recruiting a young apprentice can help them get on the first step of their career ladder and shape their future for years to come. You can help them gain the skills, experience and behaviours that they need to be a success in their chosen career, while boosting their confidence and independence.

*“Taking part in an apprenticeship is the best thing I’ve ever done... I’ve been able to try out lots of different jobs and gain a much better idea of the career I want in the future... When I first started I had little to no confidence but now I feel that my confidence has grown. I’m hoping to move onto a Level 3 apprenticeship next year and continue my learning journey.” (Apprentice)*

<sup>3</sup> L&W and Fair Train (2018) Work placements: a call for evidence. Department for Education.

<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/621565/OTJ\\_training\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621565/OTJ_training_guidance.pdf)

# Financial support for recruiting young apprentices

**While recruiting a young apprentice can bring a range of benefits to your company, there may be additional costs involved in supporting them to perform well in their role. In recognition of this, there is funding to help you as an employer to better support your young apprentices.**

This section provides advice on the funding available and how it can be used.

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## £1000 additional funding

All employers can claim £1000 when they employ an apprentice who is:

- aged 16 to 18
- aged 19 to 24 and has previously been in care
- aged 19 to 24 and has an education, health and care plan (EHCP).

You don't have to use the funding to provide specialist support to a young apprentice. However, some of the case studies in this guide show how employers have successfully used the money to address their young apprentices' needs.

For more information about eligibility for this funding and how it is paid, search for 'apprenticeship funding' on gov.uk<sup>5</sup>.

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## No training costs for small employers

If you own a small business (i.e. you have fewer than 50 staff members) then the government will pay 100% of the training costs for an apprentice aged 16 to 18, or an apprentice aged 19 to 24

who is a care leaver or has an EHCP. You can also still claim the additional £1000 for recruiting apprentices with these characteristics.

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## National Insurance savings

All employers are exempt from paying employer class 1 National Insurance contributions for apprentices under the age of 25 on earnings below £827 a week (or £43,000 per annum). This means that employers who have an apprentice aged 21 to 24 paid at the National Minimum Wage would save around £1,500 in National Insurance contributions over the course of a 12-month apprenticeship. If the apprentice is paid the Real Living Wage, this saving increases to over £2,000 per year. You can find the current National Minimum Wage rates at [www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates](http://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates).

To be eligible for the exemption, your apprentice must be on a government-approved apprenticeship framework or standard. For more information, see the guidance on apprenticeship funding in England.

<sup>5</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/730063/Apprenticeship\\_funding\\_policy\\_in\\_England\\_from\\_August\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/730063/Apprenticeship_funding_policy_in_England_from_August_2018.pdf)

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### Bursaries for apprentices

In addition to funding for employers, bursaries are available to support apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds to meet additional costs associated with apprenticeships. Employers may wish to point their apprentices towards these funds.

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Apprentices in financial hardship should look into whether their provider has independent 'hardship funds'. Those accessing an apprenticeship through a further education college can apply for 'discretionary learner support'<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/discretionary-learner-support>

# Ways to support young apprentices

**This section provides practical advice and examples of support that you can put in place for young apprentices in your workplace. It covers both the recruitment and in-work support of apprentices aged 16 to 24.**

You can pick and choose the suggestions that suit your workplace. You don't have to put all the examples in place to support a young apprentice, and not all of these tips are appropriate for every employer.

*'Our apprenticeship content is visually more engaging, we use less narrative, but we talk about getting into work, getting on at work... and the benefits the apprenticeship does to start your career. We very much use it as an early career stimulus.'* (Large employer, retail sector)

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## Recruitment and selection

There are a range of steps that you can take to ensure that your apprenticeship recruitment processes are accessible to young people. These include:

- **Reviewing job descriptions and person specifications** to ensure that the skills and experience required for the role do not unintentionally create barriers for young applicants, such as length of experience or qualifications that are not essential for the role.
- **Ensuring any advertisement is attractive and accessible for young people**, for example, using visual materials, avoiding 'jargon', and appealing to young people's career ambitions. Include information about progression opportunities. Young people search for vacancies that are well paid, so you may also want to consider paying the full rate for the job advertised and not just the apprentice rate
- **Advertising apprenticeship vacancies in a range of places**, including on Find an Apprenticeship<sup>8</sup>, through your training provider and any local employment support agencies or projects targeted at young people.
- **Working with schools and colleges** to highlight opportunities in your business and sector. This can create a pipeline of future talent for your company and raise young people's awareness of apprenticeships as a viable training and employment route.
- **Working with larger companies in your supply chain** to identify young people who may be a good fit for an apprenticeship with a smaller firm. Large businesses often have an excess of applicants who they have interviewed and vetted but cannot take on, but who may still make excellent apprentices. Larger employers can also transfer their surplus apprenticeship funding to SMEs to support recruitment and training.



- **Using different recruitment methods**, rather than just a formal interview. You might consider using competency-based activities, role plays, presentations, tasks and exercises to vary the format of your assessment processes and ensure that young people with different learning styles can showcase their strengths.
- **Providing applicants with all the information they require** to do a good interview or assessment. Remember, these young people may never have been interviewed before, so be clear about where the interview will be, what time they need to arrive, what they should wear and what will be expected of them. You should also provide a named contact for questions or concerns prior to the interview.
- **Giving young applicants a courtesy call before their interview** to say you are looking forward to seeing them and to check they know where they are going. Some people may not turn up to an interview because they are worried or nervous, but an encouraging phone call can help to put them at ease.
- **Recruiting through apprenticeship pathways and entry programmes.** A different approach to the recruitment of young apprentices is to start them on an entry programme, rather than recruiting directly to an apprenticeship. Traineeships, supported internships and/or work experience placements can be an effective way of supporting a young person to develop the skills and competencies they need for an apprenticeship, while also giving you an opportunity to see if they are a good fit for your business.

Traineeships can be a good pre-apprenticeship option for young people who have previously been unemployed, or who come from a disadvantaged background and may need extra support to prepare them for an apprenticeship.

See the 'further information and resources' section at the end of this guide for more details.



### **Hampshire County Council: Supporting care leavers into apprenticeships**

Hampshire County Council are a local authority employer, who provide their own apprenticeships. Hampshire County Council have a history of working with and supporting care leavers. They have developed recruitment practices to ensure accessibility for care leavers, including using traineeships as a progression route into apprenticeships.

Hampshire County Council have strong links with social workers, progression coaches and personal advisors, so care leavers are often referred to them. They also actively target care leavers in recruitment – for example, by giving talks to care leavers about their apprenticeship programmes.

Care leavers are often initially recruited to a traineeship programme, which acts as a bridge to an apprenticeship. A mentor support worker provides trainees with enhanced monitoring, mentoring and support which is tailored to individual needs. This may include helping a trainee to manage their life outside work – for example, budgeting and living independently – as well as in-work advice and support.

When care leavers progress onto an apprenticeship, their mentor support worker works closely with their workplace mentor and line manager to ensure that support is joined up. Once on the apprenticeship, care

leavers' additional support is funded by the additional payment of £1000, and apprentices receive the £1000 government bursary which contributes towards their living costs.

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### **On-the-job support**

Young apprentices are likely to need some additional support to perform well in their role and reach their full potential.

#### **Make sure staff are confident supporting a young apprentice**

Before a young apprentice starts, make sure that you speak to their colleagues to check that they are confident in working with and supporting a young person in the workplace. This not only includes their line manager and any supervisors or mentors, but also members of their wider team who will work alongside them.

It is important that your staff have realistic expectations of the apprentice but are also able to set them meaningful and challenging work which can help them develop skills, confidence and experience. Make it clear to your managers and employees that you want staff to feel comfortable raising issues or support needs, that you and other managers will take these seriously and, where possible, put support arrangements in place. This will help all staff, not just young apprentices, to feel supported and valued in the workplace.

To achieve this, you may want to do a quick briefing in a team meeting, or have a one-to-one with the apprentice's

line manager and mentor. If your apprentice has any specific support needs (for example, a learning difficulty or experience of being in care), you could use some of the £1000 payment to pay a specialist organisation to deliver a short awareness raising session with your staff.

### **Portsmouth City Council: Training for manager and mentors**

In the last year, Portsmouth City Council has begun to deliver mentoring training for apprentices' line managers and mentors. The training course explores the type of support both line managers and mentors should provide to apprentices, as well as explaining the general structure of an apprenticeship and the ways in which managers should work with providers.

Mentors and managers are taught that they may need to 'read between the lines', particularly with young apprentices. For example, if an apprentice who is usually punctual is late for work, there may be an issue in their personal life – rather than being accusatory, mentors and managers should ask questions to find out if the apprentice needs additional support.

The course also provides managers with an overview of the structure of an apprenticeship and emphasises the manager's role in communicating with the provider. Portsmouth City Council has found that apprenticeships are most successful when managers have direct communication with the provider, rather than communicating via their Apprenticeship Officer.

Overall, the training has cost Portsmouth approximately £2,500 for four half-day workshops with 15 staff in each workshop. The cost is covered by the additional payment of £1,000 for young apprentices, and additional costs covered by NI contribution savings. The Apprenticeship Officer emphasises that this cost is small compared to the number of manager and mentors reached and the high return on investment when young apprentices are properly managed and mentored.

Portsmouth have added to that their own learning and development officers are working with the trainer to begin to deliver this in house - so in the future there will be no additional costs to training manager and mentors.

### **Work with the young person and their training provider to identify and address support needs**

You should work with the young apprentice and their training provider to identify their support needs and address these in your workplace. This will ensure that support is tailored and effective, and that you do not unintentionally force help onto a young person who does not want or need it.

Prior to a young apprentice starting, you can speak to their training provider to find out if they have any specific support needs and how these can be addressed. The training provider should conduct a thorough assessment of each young person's needs and skills, so they will be able to advise on the types of support that you can put in place before they start at your company.

You should also speak to the young person to find out what support they would (and would not) find helpful in the workplace. You can explore this in their induction initially, but it should also be part of an ongoing conversation through supervision, mentoring and line management meetings.

### **Fujitsu: Effective monitoring**

Fujitsu is an information and communication technology company. They offer a range of apprenticeships, from Level 3 upwards, primarily in Manchester, Telford and Bracknell. To monitor an apprentice's progress, Fujitsu holds quarterly calls with their training providers and receives monthly reports highlighting the apprentice's progress and any issues or concerns. This frequent communication ensures that any issues are flagged up early and that appropriate support is put in place for young apprentices.

Apprentices also work with the provider's skills coaches to fill in monthly 'temperature checks' to demonstrate how well they believe they are doing.

Fujitsu is currently developing a mobile app which will enable apprentices to track their progress digitally. The application displays apprentices' 'portfolio of evidence'. Tasks are given a RAG status, allowing them to track their progress towards their end assessment.

### **Provide a thorough induction**

While all staff will require a comprehensive induction, young apprentices may need some additional support to understand their role and the expectations of them in the workplace.

In their induction, make sure you provide information and support for a young apprentice to:

- Understand precisely what is expected of them as an employee in terms of dress code, time management and general work behaviours;
- Understand their job description, their role and how to complete their work effectively; and
- See how their work fits with their wider team and know where they can go to for support if they need it.

### **Rambutan: High quality and comprehensive induction**

Rambutan is a small employment management consultancy, with 11 staff members. To prepare successful apprenticeship candidates for their position, a Rambutan consultant stays in touch with apprentices before they start. They ensure that apprentices are aware of what will happen on their first day, what to wear and what to bring, as well as answering any questions they may have.

Once in post, Rambutan staff carry out a thorough induction. On their first day, apprentices are given a 'welcome handbook' which provides information about the business, a set of tasks to

complete and a schedule for their first two weeks. To integrate them into the team, apprentices have time planned to shadow each team member within the two-week schedule. The handbook also includes a 'glossary' covering definitions of work jargon that young people may not know, including specialist consultancy terms and more common employment terms.

Rambutan believes that the additional support young apprentices need is outweighed by their benefits to the business. Their young apprentices have brought new skills, perspectives and enthusiasm into the business, balanced the age profile of their staff and are an integral part of Rambutan team.

*"The benefits are massive; we've got a real opportunity to get a younger perspective. At Rambutan, we're really open to different ways of doing things, so we get them involved in our thinking sessions. I'm constantly saying to them, 'If you see something that we do and you think there's a better way to do it, tell us'." (Rambutan Consultant)*

### **Offer additional support to develop work-appropriate behaviour and life skills**

A young apprentice may need some additional support to understand work-appropriate behaviour and develop their general employability skills. This could be done through mentoring or one-to-one support from their line manager as an extended induction process. Or you could use some of the additional funding to

purchase general employability training from the apprentice's training provider, or another organisation. Some employers have chosen to run residential weekends. This would give apprentices a thorough introduction to the behaviours and attitudes that will be expected of them in the workplace.

### **Portsmouth City Council: Employability training and social enrichment**

Portsmouth City Council believes that an apprenticeship programme for young people should go beyond the specific job duties and facilitate an introduction to workplace behaviours and competencies.

This year, Portsmouth City Council hosted a residential personal development programme for their apprentices, run by Kingswood, an experienced provider of outdoor education. The programme included team building, confidence boosting, problem solving and leadership activities. The activity is open to all apprentices, but the majority of Portsmouth City Council's apprentices are young, and they have found that the programme can help to address issues with confidence for these apprentices, as well as enabling them to gain more general employability skills like communication and team working. Additionally, the residential trip provides social enrichment for apprentices, allowing apprentices from across the council to meet for the first time.

*"For this organisation, it was important that the apprentice experience went beyond their specific job role and allowed the apprentice to gain more general and transferable employment skills. If they are working in an office then let them sit with all of the different parts of that team so they get a rounded understanding of the team."*  
(Portsmouth City Council)

*" At work I'm required to communicate in many different ways to solve problems and to work as a team of people from different backgrounds and ages. The activities I did enabled me to use and expand on these specific skills to improve the way I work."*  
(Apprentice)

*" Before the trip, I did not know anyone in the group, but I am so glad I went on the development programme as I really enjoyed getting to know a whole new group of people; it was nice to learn about other people's role in the council."*  
(Apprentice)

### **Provide a mentor or coach as well as a line manager**

Regular one-to-one meetings with their line manager or mentor can give a young apprentice plenty of opportunities to discuss their progress, any difficulties they may be experiencing and for managers to identify any additional support needs. Some employers prefer line managers and mentors to be distinct, and young apprentices may find it helpful to have a 'mentor' who is responsible for their personal development.



*“[It helps] having at least one person allocated to you, and not just your line manager. Somebody who’s there for your personal development and things like that, not just how you’re doing in your job.” (Apprentice)*

Some employers have offered mentoring opportunities to a team member other than the line manager, others have used a ‘buddy’ system, with older apprentices taking on a peer-mentor role for young apprentices.

#### **Fujitsu: Wide support network**

Fujitsu works to ensure young apprentices have access to a wide support network in the workplace. As well as their line manager, they will have a buddy who works in the same location and who is also an apprentice but has been with the company for at least a year. A few months into their programme, apprentices get a mentor from Fujitsu’s graduate programme. Apprentices also receive support from their provider’s skills coaches who regularly check on apprentices’ progress.

Apprentices are also encouraged to interact with each other. When new apprentices first arrive, they are given a welcome call by one of the ‘Apprenticeship Ambassadors’ who are part of the Fujitsu Apprentice Academy Board. In addition to this, Fujitsu are developing an online networking portal which will allow for virtual interaction among UK based apprentices and will facilitate peer support.

Fujitsu also have a range of peer-led support networks, which are open to all staff including apprentices. For example, the disability network group provides space for staff members to share their experiences, as well as advise the organisation on its disability policy and practice.

#### **Social enrichment activities**

Young apprentices may feel lonely in the workplace, particularly if they are the only young person among an older workforce. Additionally, some apprentices worry that taking a vocational education route will mean they miss out on the social experience of going to university. Some employers have found that providing opportunities for social enrichment – both for apprentices to bond with each other and the wider workforce – can help apprentices to settle into the workplace and enjoy their apprenticeship experience.

Creating a community of young apprentices in the workplace also enables them to support each other by talking about their shared experiences and finding solutions to common challenges.

# Further information and resources

Below are brief descriptions and links to other useful information and resources about recruiting and supporting young apprentices, as well as organisations which can offer specialist advice and support.

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## Amazing Apprenticeships

This organisation offers information, resources and opportunities to network for employers, providers, careers professionals and potential, current and past apprentices.

[amazingapprenticeships.com](http://amazingapprenticeships.com)

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## Apprenticeship funding in England

This publication offers further details on apprenticeship funding in England, including the additional £1000 payment for employers, National Insurance contribution exemptions and National Minimum Wage rates for apprentices.

**Search for 'apprenticeship funding' on gov.uk to find out more.**

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## Apprenticeship off-the-job training

This guide on gov.uk provides more information about the off-the-job training requirements involved in an apprenticeship. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/621565/OTJ\\_training\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/621565/OTJ_training_guidance.pdf)

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## Careers and Enterprise Company

The CEC can help you promote opportunities for young people in your business through its network of Enterprise Advisers.

[www.careersandenterprise.co.uk](http://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk)

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## Find an Apprenticeship

This is the national service for employers to advertise and for young people to search and apply for apprenticeships.

[www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)

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## Get in Go far

This is the government's apprenticeships campaign website, promoting apprenticeships and providing information, advice and guidance. There is a dedicated employer section which provides information on employing apprentices, case studies of successful apprenticeship employers and access to training providers and specialist advisers.

Find out more at [hireanapprentice.campaign.gov.uk](http://hireanapprentice.campaign.gov.uk)

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## National Apprenticeship Service

This service has lots of information about apprenticeships and traineeships, including how to employ an apprentice, the funding available and the support employers can access. To find out more, search 'apprenticeship' on [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) or call 08000 150 600.



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## Remploy

Remploy is a leading provider of specialist employment and skills support for disabled people and those with health conditions. They offer dedicated apprenticeships for disabled people, can provide specialist advisors to support young apprentices with mental health problems, and run several supported internship programmes. To find out more, visit [www.remploy.co.uk/employers](http://www.remploy.co.uk/employers)

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## Supported internships

Supported internships are a study programme based primarily with an employer. They enable young people aged 16-24 with a statement of special education needs (SEN), a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan to achieve sustainable paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. To find out more, visit [www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/supported-internships](http://www.preparingforadulthood.org.uk/downloads/supported-internships)

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## Traineeships

Traineeships are an education and training programme with work experience. They last between six weeks and six months and are focused on helping young people aged 16 to 24 to prepare for an apprenticeship or other employment. To find out more, visit [www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/traineeships-programme).



For those organisations interested in delivering traineeships, L&W have produced some guidance, including 'top tips' on delivering traineeships and maximising progression into apprenticeships. You can find these at [www.learningandwork.org.uk/traineeships](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/traineeships)

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## Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

The YAAN is a group of past and current apprentices who promote apprenticeships and inspire other young people by describing their direct experience. Your local YAAN could help promote your apprenticeship opportunities to young people. [amazingapprenticeships.com/yaan](http://amazingapprenticeships.com/yaan)

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## Young Chamber

This programme from the British Chambers of Commerce connects businesses to local education providers. It can help you create links with schools and colleges to support recruitment to your apprenticeships. [www.britishchambers.org.uk/page/young-chamber](http://www.britishchambers.org.uk/page/young-chamber)

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