



# FIRE IT UP



## Apprenticeships

Thinking about employing  
an apprentice?

Looking for the right person  
for your apprenticeship role?

Did you know that you could  
receive an additional £1,000  
payment if you take on a care  
leaver as an apprentice?

Employers receive £1,000 if an apprentice is  
aged 16-24 and has previously been in care.

Your training provider will also receive an additional £1000 payment.

Young people leaving care can face additional barriers to getting an apprenticeship. For many care leavers, taking on an apprenticeship, whilst learning to live independently and manage their finances for the first time can be a huge challenge, especially in the first year of an apprenticeship when wages can be lower for some apprentices.

To help to support young people leaving care to make the transition to work, from August 2023, a £3,000 bursary payment is also available for care leavers choosing to do an apprenticeship, paid via the training provider.



[www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

[nationalhelpdesk@  
apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk)

0800 015 0400



LEARNING AND  
WORK INSTITUTE



## Who is a care leaver?

Care leavers are young people who have been looked after by the state, for some or all of their childhood, and have subsequently left the care system or are in the process of doing so. Evidence shows that young people who have been in care do not have the same life chances as other young people. It is well known that many care leavers face serious disadvantage growing up and that this can affect their long-term futures.

Despite the challenges they face, young people who have been in local authority care have huge potential – they often just need some extra support in the early stages of their working lives to help unleash their talents and give them the confidence to build great careers.

Because of their experiences, many care leavers also develop a strong sense of resilience and independence, along with good problem-solving skills and maturity beyond that of many of their peers. Employing care leavers can sometimes present challenges. However, it's important to focus on the strengths and attributes that care leavers bring – by doing so your business will benefit from employees who offer fresh new talent, energy and a range of skills.

## What are the benefits of apprenticeships?

- Apprenticeships are a great way for you to bring new talent into your organisation and train your team with the skills they need to help your business succeed.
- The training your apprentice receives can be adapted to meet the needs of your organisation
- Employers who have an established apprenticeship programme generally report increased productivity in the workplace and that apprenticeships improve the quality of their product or service.
- 90% of apprentices stay on in their place of work after completing an apprenticeship

## Why you should support care leavers?

Here are just some of the reasons, why you as an employer should support care leavers to gain and complete apprenticeships.

### ● It makes good business sense

Providing good support to care leavers will improve your public profile whilst simultaneously helping these recruits to be productive, confident and happy in their jobs

### ● It makes good use of the Apprenticeship Levy

If your organisation pays the Apprenticeship Levy then offering an apprenticeship for care leavers is a good investment of your levy funding, which should help to bring new talent into your organisation

### ● It could help with training costs

If you have fewer than 50 employees, you will not have to contribute towards the training costs of care leavers - the government will pay 100% of their training and assessment fees

### ● It helps to create a diverse workforce

Providing a small amount of advice and support can help care leavers become dedicated and confident apprentices helping you to diversify and freshen up your workforce.

### ● It can make a huge difference to young people's lives

A good learning or working experience at an early age will help care leavers to overcome the difficulties and challenges they have experienced and help them on their way to a happy, successful and independent life.

## CASE STUDY: ROBIN

Taking part in an apprenticeship is the best thing I've ever done. My apprenticeship with the local authority's Children's Services department allows me to experience lots of different roles that work with children. For example, I work in both the Direct Service team and the School Governors team.

Because of this, 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. Being an apprentice has also given me the chance to gain a qualification while I work and I can use what I learn at college in my workplace and everyday life. I'm hoping to move onto a Level 3 apprenticeship next year and continue my learning journey.

# Hints and tips on supporting care leavers

Taking on an apprentice, whatever age or background, will need some preparation from you, as the employer. This section gives some hints and tips for employers to support care leavers at each stage of their apprenticeship.

Some organisations work with employers to offer apprenticeships specifically for care leavers. For example, Barnardo's offer a bespoke apprenticeship scheme for care leavers, ensuring they have the support to succeed as an apprentice. Read our case studies at [www.learningandwork.org.uk/care-leavers](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk/care-leavers) to find out more.



## Recruitment and selection

While individual lives and circumstances vary, some care leavers will not have had the parental support and guidance that many young people take for granted and which help them to submit good apprenticeship applications, prepare well for interviews and consider things like travel, punctuality and appropriate dress.

The following tips will help you put good support in place for care leavers when advertising and interviewing for apprenticeship vacancies.

### Advertising

You may not know whether an applicant for your apprenticeship is a care leaver – many will be reluctant to declare their experiences of care as they will be unsure how employers will react to this information. This can make it difficult to put additional support in place for care leavers during the recruitment and selection process.

To overcome this you could:

- **Guarantee interviews to any care leavers who apply.** This could encourage young people to identify themselves as a care leaver and will mean that they get valuable experience of participating in an interview, whether or not you offer them a job.
- Make it clear in your recruitment materials that you **welcome applications from people from all backgrounds, including those who have previously been in care.** You should also provide information on how applicants can declare information that may be relevant to the recruitment process – this could include disabilities or caring responsibilities, as well as experience of being in care.

- When advertising a vacancy, as well as the usual routes, **consider publicising the vacancy via local organisations that work with care leavers,** care leaver teams within your local authority, local colleges and social networking sites.

### Interviewing

Many care leavers may not have had experience of an interview. When interviewing young people and care leavers in particular, consider:

- **Having a relatively informal approach to the interview**
- **Using a variety of interview techniques** e.g. question and answer, role play, tasks and exercises to suit different learning styles and ensure young people are provided with the opportunity to showcase their strengths.
- **Provide additional support for all applicants** to ensure enhanced support at the interview stage (this extra support will help to put care leavers on a level playing field with other applicants). This could include letting applicants know what the interview will entail; how they should dress; offering an informal visit to the organisation, accompanied by someone supporting them; providing a named contact for any concerns prior to interview; an encouraging phone call the day before the interview to check they know where to go and to say you are looking forward to seeing them.

If you are in contact with a support worker, who is working with a young person selected for interview, you could also suggest that they help the young person prepare e.g. thinking about possible interview questions and having a mock interview.

Your training provider can also support you when you take on an apprentice, for example helping with recruitment, preparing your apprentice for your organisation and finding the right pace of learning for the young person.

# Ongoing support

Staff who provide support to care leavers have a key role to play in enabling care leavers to be a productive and dedicated apprentice and to successfully complete their apprenticeship.

## Tips for line managers and supervisors

1. **Provide support for care leavers to understand their apprenticeship role** and how to complete their work effectively; to understand precisely what is expected of them as an apprentice, including information about assessments and when these will happen, and to feel they are valued and part of a wider team.
2. **Make sure care leavers feel listened to and valued.** Care leavers can often lack self-esteem and confidence. Being supported by a manager offers an opportunity to form a trusting attachment with an adult, creating space for the young person to grow and develop and to move forward in a positive way. You can do this by:
  - **Being on a level with the young person** – Take an interest in the young person. Getting to know them and empathise with them is crucial to help to build a productive relationship
  - **Giving clear directions and instructions and offer appropriate support** – The young people you are working with may initially need you to work with them to show them how to do things. Focus on the strengths and the positive attributes that the young person has.
  - **Setting goals** – Work with the young person to help them set goals, including longer term goals, and outcomes for themselves and work out the steps they need to take to achieve them
3. **Provide holistic support and put their actions in context.** Don't forget that care leavers may need support about things other than the apprenticeship role – check that they are able to travel to work. If they don't turn up at work and don't phone in, try to find out why. Don't just assume the worst and give up on a young person. They may be extremely worried about something at work but are avoiding discussing it; they may be having a difficult time in their wider life, with their health or moving out to live independently for example.

Take the time to find out the situation and see if you can help. However, avoid asking about their personal circumstances or history of being in care. They may choose to bring it up themselves but you should not broach the subject with a young person yourself.
4. **Ensure that managers and other staff that work with care leavers have support available for when things might not quite go according to plan.**

- **Being positive** – Tell the young person what you see as their strengths and give them positive feedback for their achievements.
- **Be appropriately challenging** – Don't be afraid to be clear about boundaries and challenge behaviour if necessary. Work with the young person to address any issues and ask them how you can support them in this.



Consider making a specific commitment, as an employer, to support care leavers by signing up to the **Care Leaver Covenant** – a promise made by private, public or voluntary sector organisations to provide support for care leavers as they make the transition to adulthood.

# Find out more

The following websites have information on care leavers which you might find useful:

## Barnardo's

A charity working to support children, young people and the organisations working with them.

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

## Become

Information and support for young people living in care and the professionals supporting them.

[www.becomecharity.org.uk](http://www.becomecharity.org.uk)

## Care Leaver Covenant

The Care Leaver Covenant allows public, private and voluntary sector organisations to pledge support to help young people leaving care to become independent. The Care Leaver Covenant App provides information about local opportunities available for care leavers.

[www.mycovenant.org.uk](http://www.mycovenant.org.uk)

## Catch22

Catch22 offer a range of employability and training programmes tailored to the needs of disadvantaged young people, including care leavers, and employers.

[www.catch-22.org.uk](http://www.catch-22.org.uk)

## Learning and Work Institute

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

[www.learningandwork.org.uk](http://www.learningandwork.org.uk)

## Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust runs programmes for young people aged 14-30, including young people in care and care leavers, to help people move into work, education or training.

[www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

For more information on apprenticeships visit the government's website at <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>

The National Apprenticeship Service website has lots of information about apprenticeships including FAQs. [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

