

# Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships

**Jobwise Training**  
*London, England*



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## Case study summary

Drawing on government funding for traineeships, Jobwise Training introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme in 2013. The programme focusses on business administration, predominantly in the healthcare sector. Focusing on a particular sector allows them to match employers with a supply of young people who are keen to develop the specific skills and work experience that they need for apprenticeship vacancies.

Most young people on Jobwise's pre-apprenticeship are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and many are former offenders or gang affiliated. The majority are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, with learners of Bangladeshi heritage being the predominant group.

This case study highlights best practice in engaging employers in pre-apprenticeship programmes, including effective matching of young people with hiring employers, specific employer engagement activities as well as facilitating work placements. In particular, Jobwise Training deliver employer engagement activities such as "Dragons Den" which aim to develop young people's presentation skills, to build confidence and provides an opportunity for young people to showcase their skills, abilities and talent to prospective employers. Jobwise emphasise the importance of ensuring that basic skills such as literacy and maths are embedded throughout all aspects of their programme. Dragons Den provides an engaging opportunity to contextualise literacy and maths in a way that is meaningful for them, for example by drafting accounts and creating budgets for the business concept they have designed.

## Key programme details

- Jobwise utilise a variety of methods for recruiting young people on to their pre-apprenticeship, which is underpinned by clear progression focused marketing and messaging.
- Young people undergo a robust initial assessment of literacy and maths skills using the digital platform BKSB, combined with a face-to-face interview to gauge young people's readiness to take part in the programme.
- Jobwise aim to support trainees to progress to an apprenticeship within 4 months of starting the programme. The first 3 weeks of the pre-apprenticeship features a series of employability coaching through 'Work Ready' classes which includes CV preparation and mock interviews with employers.
- Sector specific topics (including business administration and healthcare specific topics) are integrated in to the timetable to ensure the programme is designed around employers' needs.
- Work placements take place in a sector of choice and begin between 6 to 9 weeks after young people start the programme depending on when they are ready and last an average of 4 weeks.
- The programme costs approximately £2,500 per person

## Country context

Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16 living in England and combine a job with training. Training takes place both in the workplace and off the job, typically in a college or training centre. Most sectors of the economy offer apprenticeship opportunities in a wide range of job roles. There are four different levels of apprenticeship; intermediate, advanced, higher and degree level. The length of an apprenticeship depends on a number of factors, such as the level of the apprenticeship and the chosen sector.

- Intermediate apprenticeships typically last between one year and 18 months.
- Advanced apprenticeships are usually over two years.
- Higher and degree apprenticeships take three-to-six years to complete.

Apprenticeships are a key government policy priority in England. Successive governments have reformed the way in which apprenticeships are funded as well as delivered and have introduced targets to increase apprenticeship numbers. Reforms are designed to drive economic growth by meeting employers' skills needs and boost social mobility by extending opportunity.

Government-funded pre-apprenticeships operate under the brand name 'traineeships'. Traineeships were introduced in 2013 and are aimed at young people aged 16-24 years old, or young people with Learning Difficulty Assessments or Education, Health and Care plans up to the age of 25.

In March 2018, there were 808,000 young people (11.5%) aged 16 to 24 years in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). Of all young people in the UK who were NEET, 39.9% were looking for work and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed.<sup>1</sup>

Traineeships are designed to help young people gain the skills and experience they need to get an apprenticeship or job. The target group for traineeships are young people who:

- Are not currently in employment and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it.
- Are aged 16 to 24 and qualified below level 3; and
- Have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or an apprenticeship within six months of engaging in a traineeship.

Traineeships are made up of three core elements:

- High-quality work experience.
- A focused period of work preparation training.
- English and maths if required.

## The pre-apprenticeship at Jobwise Training

Jobwise Training are an independent training provider that was established in 1979 with the purpose of improving the skill levels of London's workforce through training, apprenticeships and qualifications. They are a government funded organisation and are graded as being outstanding by OFSTED, the organisation that inspects education and training in England. Drawing on the available government funding for traineeships, Jobwise introduced their pre-apprenticeship programme in 2013.

Jobwise Training specialise in providing pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships in business administration, predominantly in the healthcare sector. By focusing on a particular sector, jobwise is able to provide employers with a supply of young people with the particular skills and work experience that they need.

## Recruitment

Most young people on the pre-apprenticeship are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and many are former offenders or gang affiliated. The majority are from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds with learners of Bangladeshi heritage being the predominant group.

Jobwise utilise a variety of methods for recruiting young people on to the pre-apprenticeship. Key to the success of this is their clear progression focused marketing and messaging. They have designed a range of marketing materials that explain the core elements of the programme and place a strong focus on the apprenticeship opportunities available to young people on completion of their pre-apprenticeship. An example is a marketing leaflet that advertises Jobwise's 'NHS traineeships programme'. The leaflet names specific NHS hospitals who are recruiting for live apprenticeship vacancies and the salary that trainees who progress to these opportunities will earn. Marketing also states other clear benefits of the traineeship, including:

- Guaranteed interview with an apprenticeship employer.
- Paid bursary allowance for attendance.
- Assigned mentor.
- Guaranteed four weeks work experience.

<sup>1</sup> Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: May 2018 (ONS, accessed 25/07/18)

Jobwise utilise their strong working relationships with local councils who refer potential trainees on a regular basis. Other activities include open days which are held throughout the year. Jobwise also has a dedicated Client Accounts Management (CAM) team who run various social media campaigns e.g. through twitter and Facebook. Many young people also self-refer to Jobwise having heard of the programme through word of mouth as it has developed a strong reputation in the local area.

## Initial assessment

Initial assessment is an important part of the recruitment process, which includes an assessment of maths and English skills level, and a face-to-face interview. Young people complete an assessment of English and maths using a tried and tested online platform known as BKSB.

The face to face interview provides young people with a thorough introduction to the programme, so they can make an informed decision about whether it's the right path for them.

To guide this process, Jobwise use a holistic questionnaire which explores young people's motivations for joining the programme, career aspirations, personal and social circumstances, financial circumstances, prior school experiences, barriers to learning, e.g. negative school experiences, and other information that is relevant to their long-term progression to an apprenticeship in the health sector, e.g. criminal records. Conducting such a holistic questionnaire ensures that Jobwise can put comprehensive support in place, to enable each young person to make a success of their traineeship and progress to an apprenticeship.

## Model of delivery

Following induction and an initial assessment, Jobwise aim to support trainees to progress to an apprenticeship within 4 months of starting the programme. However, young people have the option to stay with Jobwise longer than this if they require a longer period of support and training to be ready for an apprenticeship.

The small classroom sizes (up to a maximum of fifteen trainees, but typically much smaller) keep young people engaged and allows tutors to build rapport with young people. A small team of staff deliver the traineeship, comprised of five tutors with a combination of specialisms in maths and English, business administration and workplace skills; four assessors, and the Client Accounts Managers who oversee the recruitment, continuous assessment and mentoring of young people.

Through the government funding they access, Jobwise pay all trainees a bursary for attending. The bursary supports travel and other costs and is a further incentive that motivates young people to engage. The bursary is particularly important given the profile of the target group, many of whom are from low income families.

In the classroom, there's a strong focus on encouraging young people to take ownership of their own learning and development. Tutors proactively encourage group discussions to facilitate critical thinking and encourage young people to form and execute their own opinions. They have several ways of doing this, including asking young people to debate a popular news-related topic they've read in the newspaper. Such activities that promote critical thinking and public

speaking amongst young people enable and them to develop the interpersonal skills needed in the workplace.

## Content

On day one, young people are taken to a local coffee shop with their mentor, usually a staff member working in the Customer Accounts Management (CAMs) team. The CAMs team have responsibility for managing relationships with employers as well as providing mentoring support for young people. This early engagement provides an early opportunity for mentors to build rapport with young people and is particularly helpful for those who have had negative prior schooling experiences. On the second day, tutors take young people shopping for their own professional work clothing. This helps young people to feel valued and also ensures the environment at Jobwise Training is seen as a professional one. When employers visit the training environment, they're more likely to have a positive perception of young people.

*"They understand it's not a college course, we're going to treat them like adults"* (**James Pearson, Operations Director**)

The first 3 weeks of the pre-apprenticeship is very focused and features a series of employability coaching through 'Work Ready'. Work Ready includes activities such as CV and cover letter writing, interview preparation, journey (travel) planning and mock interviews with employers.

Sector specific topics are integrated in to the timetable to ensure the programme is designed around employers' needs. This typically includes business administration, and topics and skills needed within the health care sector.

An example of this is the way in which Jobwise recently tailored their pre-apprenticeship programme to meet the requirements of a local hospital, who were planning for an intake of new apprentices. The hospital identified a requirement for apprentices to have a basic understanding of infection control. Jobwise staff were able to draw on their experience of working with employers in the health sector to tailor their pre-apprenticeship programme and incorporate the required focus. This provided the hospital with a supply of potential apprentices, with the skills they require.

A unique part of the programme known as Dragons Den aims to develop young people's presentation skills, to build confidence and provides an opportunity for young people to showcase their skills, abilities and talent to prospective employers.

Working as part of a team, young people design a unique business concept. Each team member takes on a specific role, such as a marketeer, an accountant, team leader; giving them insight to different roles.

Together, young people present their business concept to a panel of local employers, who in turn ask a series of questions. Through this process, young people gain important work-related skills such as being pro-active, thinking on their feet, interpersonal skills and how to work in a team.

Young people receive tailored feedback from employers at the end of the session, focussed around their strengths and areas for improvement. The added benefit is that employers have direct access / vision of young people, and often invite young people to be interviewed for a work placement, which in turn can lead to an apprenticeship.

Jobwise have endeavoured to ensure that basic skills of maths and English are embedded throughout all aspects of the programme. Young people are also supported to improve their financial capability through personal budgeting. Dragons Den provides a further opportunity to contextualise English and maths, whereby young people draft accounts and create budgets for the business concept they have designed.

Contextualising numeracy, where concepts such as area and perimeter are taught in a way that's useful in the workplace is important in enabling young people to understand the context of their learning and its transferability to the workplace.

## Work Placements

Jobwise strongly emphasise that work placements should be a meaningful experience for young people, and that the content of the placement needs to be relevant and useful in order to boost a young person's chances of progressing to an apprenticeship.

Work placements begin between 6 to 9 weeks after young people start the programme depending on when they are ready and last an average of 4 weeks.

Available work placements are advertised on a job board in a communal area that young people have access to daily. This is a helpful reminder of the progression opportunities available to young people, helping to maintain their motivation.

Young people indicate their preferred apprenticeship sector on their initial application form, or if they prefer, they can select a few sectors and then make a more informed decision further along the programme.

The process for matching young people with a suitable employer is carried out by the CAMs team. The team make decisions about which young people are work-ready, and which employers are most suited to a young person. Where young people express an interest in working in a specific sector, the team ensure they embark on a relevant work placement. Appropriately matching young people and employers helps to develop good relationships, giving young people and the employer reassurance the placement is a good fit.

Young people undergo a standard application process in which they complete an application form and attend an interview with the employer. This is an opportunity for young people to learn of their responsibilities and an employer's expectations. It also helps to ensure that trainees understand that they need to show strong commitment to the training in order to progress into an apprenticeship.

Work placements are positively viewed as a type of probationary period where young people and employers have the chance to test each other out to see if they are a good match.

*"Sometimes, after maybe a week or two, the employer can say, 'Actually, I'm happy with this person. Let's offer this person an apprenticeship right now,' and we'll start from there."* **(Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)**

Prospective employers are interviewed by Jobwise before providing work placements for young people. The employer interview includes a health and safety inspection of the workplace, a discussion of the work placement job description and how confident the employer is in supporting the young person. The interview is also an opportunity for Jobwise and the employer to

make decisions about what activities/duties young people should carry out on their work placement.

All young people are allocated a workplace mentor who is independent from the workplace manager. Regular workplace reviews, that include clear goal setting and opportunities for reflection, enable young people to remain focused on their goals and see the progress they are making towards an apprenticeship.

A weekly review is carried out between young people and their workplace mentor using a standardised form to guide the process. This ensures young people have the opportunity to indicate if and when they need extra support in the workplace, to reflect on their progress so far, and to create short and long term SMART<sup>2</sup> goals. Young people can also make suggestions about aspects of the workplace they would like to experience going forward.

This review process also gives employers the opportunity to provide feedback on the quality of work, achievements of young people, and to report on any changes in their employability skills since beginning the placement. This gives young people and employers the chance to sit back and reflect on progress.

Young people return their review to Jobwise on a weekly basis. This weekly contact with the tutors means that they can identify areas that could be improved or things that are going well. Continuous improvement and feedback mean young people are more likely to succeed on their work placement and maintain good relationships with the employer. Young people enjoy coming back to the learning environment to tell everyone how well they're getting on at work and how they've been able to apply their learning.

All the above review and support processes help to maintain and strengthen the employer-trainee relationship, in turn keeping the progression route to an apprenticeship open and accessible.

## Workshops

Themed workshops are held throughout the week and are tailored to the interests of young people whilst providing learning in an engaging environment. At the end of each workshop, young people complete feedback forms where they grade the content and delivery of the workshop, as well as providing suggestions for the future. This feedback informs the delivery and content of workshops, creating a continuous review cycle that feeds into the ongoing improvement of the programme.

*So, what we try and do with certain subjects, Facing Phobias is a perfect example, they didn't like the delivery, but they enjoyed the content, so we now deliver that in a pet shop in Brixton where they get to actually hold the tarantulas and snakes and whatnot. So, it means we can react to change the environment or change the content if it's not interesting enough. (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)*

Jobwise also use their existing partnerships to deliver workshops that are young people focused, e.g. sexual health workshop delivered by local sexual health clinics. Delivering workshops that are focused on young people, keeps trainees interested and potentially addresses issues they may be facing in their wider lives that can impact upon their engagement in the traineeship.

Some workshops are focused on increasing young people's contact with older adults, with the aim of improving their professional communication skills. Coffee mornings for example, provide a

space where young people network with potential employers. Young people engaged in the Jobwise pre-apprenticeship often haven't had a large degree of contact with adults outside of their family circle or school teachers. Running activities such as coffee mornings, has been an effective way of introducing trainees to older adults and overcoming one of the barriers to employment that they typically face.

## Mentoring and additional support

Young people engaged in the Jobwise traineeship often experience specific types of disadvantage that are a barrier to successful employment. To address this, Jobwise have put in place a range of support mechanisms for young people. Each young person is assigned a Jobwise mentor, who is a member of the CAMs team and is responsible for engaging with employers who offer work placements. Offering young people this type of personalised support allows them to talk through their experiences and aspirations and highlight any difficulties they are facing.

This level of support ensures that tutors and staff become aware of potential issues as and when they arise and are therefore more able to respond in a timely manner, helping to retain young people and improve their experience of the programme, and eventual successful progression from the programme to an apprenticeship.

Interestingly, members of the CAMs team are graduates of the pre-apprenticeship who have secured employment with Jobwise Training, creating a "grow your own talent" environment. This provides a form of inspiration for young people on the pre-apprenticeship. It enables them to clearly see that the programme leads to positive outcomes.

<sup>2</sup> SMART goals are targets that are Specific Measurable, Realistic and Time bound.

Important and holistic information is kept for each young person in a file in that is known as 'considerations. Considerations contains information such as the individual learning style, personal and social circumstances, and needs of each young person. This provides a mechanism for all tutors to get to know young people on an individual basis and how to best support them in the classroom.

## Effective partnership working

Employers play a key role throughout the lifespan of the Jobwise pre-apprenticeship. Employers are involved in the design and delivery of the programme. They are also involved in the inductions that young people go through and provide crucial work placements in the healthcare sector.

Jobwise work primarily with large employers in the healthcare sector. Jobwise recently worked with a local NHS hospital who provide work placements and apprenticeships to young people on the programme. To ensure young people were sufficiently prepared to work with this employer, Jobwise designed the content of the pre-apprenticeship programme around their needs. This is an effective practice that helps to provide a pipeline of 'apprenticeship-ready' young people for employers who are actively supplying opportunities.

*"The NHS Employer is a lot more defined than some of the other needs of the employers, but they specifically wanted certain things to happen at certain points. So, we designed the programme around them before we started. For example, they wanted the infection control to be in there. They wanted there to be a use of medical terminology."* (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

A key success factor in securing good progression rates for disadvantaged young people is the availability of holistic and inclusive support networks. Jobwise have developed strong partnerships with local social services teams and local housing authorities in order to ensure a continuity of support is available for those young people who would most benefit from it.

## Outcomes for young people

On completion of the pre-apprenticeship, young people often progress to an apprenticeship with Jobwise Training, usually also with the employer that offered the traineeship work experience placement. Jobwise ensures that young people have a clear understanding of the job they are taking on, and for example, ensure that young people have received a formal contract from the employer:

*"We ensure that they get contracts from the employer, that the salary's clear, that the holiday allowance is clear with them, what training plan are we going to put in place..."* (Bradley Isaacs, Operations Project Manager)

Should a young person wish to progress to an apprenticeship in a sector not offered by Jobwise, they work with other training providers in London to find a suitable place for them. Jobwise continue to support these young people during the process of moving to an apprenticeship with a different provider, ensuring it is streamlined and that the young people feel supported throughout.

Young people are offered an exit interview if they have not secured an expected outcome. Through this process, Jobwise have the opportunity to learn from young people and to review and improve the programme.

Recent provider figures (2017) revealed that of 171 young people, 49% have progressed to an apprenticeship, 13% progressed to full time employment, 12% to further education, and the proportion of those young people who have not yet progressed (26%) continue to be supported by the team at Jobwise in applying for different roles, or to further uncover their career interests.

## Best practice – key success factors

- Tailoring programmes to meet the skills needs of employers enables young people to develop specific skills that local employers are looking for when they recruit apprentices.
- A clear and sequenced structure of delivery is important for developing levels of confidence and self-esteem of young people, leading up to contact with real employers.
- Robust feedback and review processes contributes to a continual cycle of improvement of the pre-apprenticeship, taking into consideration the views of tutors, employers and young people.