

Designing and delivering pre-apprenticeships



Top tips
for providers



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Top tips for providers

Pre-apprenticeship programmes aim to help young people aged 16-24 to develop the skills needed to access an apprenticeship. Across Europe, some programmes are explicitly called 'pre-apprenticeships' whilst others have specific brand names. Such programmes typically prepare young people for apprenticeships by providing a combination of vocational training and hands-on experience, however, the components vary by individual programme.

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. L&W have been working in collaboration with J.P. Morgan to share best practice in ways in which organisations can design and deliver inclusive and high-quality pre-apprenticeship programmes that provide a pathway to apprenticeships for young people, across Europe.

These top tips are for pre-apprenticeship providers who want to develop and expand their programmes, and for providers who do not currently offer pre-apprenticeships but who plan to do so in the future. We have developed a range of resources which demonstrate effective practice in the design and delivery of pre-apprenticeships, including:

- Visit the interactive resource
- Read the case studies
- Read the key findings report
- Watch the short films

Designing your pre-apprenticeship programme



Taking time to get the design of your pre-apprenticeship programme right, at the outset, is essential in ensuring that you deliver an effective programme that reflects local labour market needs and enables young people to develop specific skills and attributes that employers are looking for.

TOP TIPS

- 💡 Tailor your programme to your local context. A pre-apprenticeship programme that responds to local employment and skills needs will be more attractive to local employers, and young people will be motivated by real apprenticeship and job opportunities. Use labour market information to identify skills needs and employment trends.
- 💡 Work with specific employers to develop bespoke pre-apprenticeship programmes. This will ensure that young people gain the skills and experience employers want and thus have the best chance of progressing into an apprenticeship



Employer engagement



Pre-apprenticeship programmes aim to support young people to develop the skills and competencies that employers require. Employers should be a key partner for programme development. This is essential in ensuring good quality and effective programmes that benefit providers, young people and employers alike.

TOP TIPS

- 💡 Engage a range of employers by using varied methods to recruit and involve a large number, rather than relying on a few common representatives.
- 💡 Gather information from employers using a variety of methods including interviews, focus groups, surveys, and presentations. It can also be useful to offer to meet employers in their own place of work.
- 💡 Establish a single point of contact for employers. This can be a useful way of ensuring that employers have a clear link with your organisation. It enables them to build a relationship with one person, who handles all the logistics related to their engagement with your programme.
- 💡 Provide wraparound support to employers: Pre-apprenticeships are more likely to be positive experiences for employers if they feel supported throughout. Regular contact with employers will enable you to answer any questions or concerns they may have and identify and address any issues as and when they arise.
- 💡 Embed evaluation throughout your employer engagement activities. This will enable you to identify what works and for whom and the outcomes and impact of your activities, supporting the continuous improvement of your employer engagement.

Developing strong partnerships



Employers are just one stakeholder amongst many, who contribute to successful pre-apprenticeship programmes. Other stakeholders can include schools, young people and their parents, public authorities, public employment services, careers guidance providers, education and training institutions, employers, trade unions and youth organisations, all of whom can boost the effectiveness of your pre-apprenticeship programme.

TOP TIPS

- 💡 Utilise a range of partnerships. A wide range of partnerships, designed to provide comprehensive and holistic support, is important in developing an effective programme. The most effective partnerships produce fluid, seamless pathways for young people to access support and progress towards employment.
- 💡 Develop a range of marketing activities and materials: Given the diversity of relevant stakeholders, marketing activities need to be varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences. Marketing activities and materials might include: holding events and briefing sessions; using posters to advertise in community spaces and at the sites of other education and training providers, such as schools; using social media; publishing newsletters; and promoting successful outcomes through case studies and testimonies.



Recruitment and initial assessment of young people



Effective recruitment and initial assessment is essential to ensure that the young people on your pre-apprenticeship programme can benefit from the opportunities and support that you offer and have the best chance of successfully progressing to an apprenticeship.

TOP TIPS

- Ensure that marketing and messaging clearly outlines the benefits of pre-apprenticeships. Setting out the benefits of a pre-apprenticeship in terms of a direct route to an apprenticeship, a better job, career, and a good wage is most likely to make the programme attractive to young people, and their parents.
- Develop a marketing strategy for your programme to tailor marketing and messages to target groups. This is particularly important if your pre-apprenticeship programme is aimed at supporting particular groups of young people to enter an apprenticeship for example, young women, black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) young people or young people with specific additional needs for example, ex-offenders, care leavers or those dealing with mental health difficulties.
- Invest in a range of marketing and outreach approaches. Marketing activities need to be varied and delivered in a range of formats to reach the widest possible audiences. Selecting which activity to run, and with whom, will depend on your chosen target group and the specific aims of your programme.
- Use online programmes to help with initial assessments of language, numeracy and other basic skills. Tried and tested online platforms such as **BKSB** and **Skills Builder** which provide initial and diagnostic assessments and learning resources for English, maths and ICT together with learning style assessments, are commonly used by UK pre-apprenticeship providers to assess numeracy and language skills levels. Programmes such as **OneFile** and **ForSkills** provide additional resources such as customised forms, portfolio journals and quality policies and tools.



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TOP TIPS

- Providing opportunities for young people to speak to staff on a 1-1 basis throughout the course of the programme is essential to encourage disclosure of additional needs. In programmes which include mentoring, the mentor/mentee relationship can also provide opportunities to discuss any difficulties young people are facing that may act as barriers to programme completion
- Develop robust initial assessment and IAG processes to enable you to effectively match trainees to the right employer and sector. This helps to keep trainees motivated by their placement and increases the likelihood of progression.



Delivering a pre-apprenticeship programme



The quality of the activities and support delivered on your pre-apprenticeship is key to ensuring that young people have a positive experience, complete their programme and progress to an apprenticeship.

TOP TIPS

-  Be flexible. Whatever model you choose, you should always aim to adapt your model to respond to any changes, such as young people's needs, the local labour market, including any changes in the skills requirements of apprenticeship programmes you are targeting. This ensures that your programme remains relevant and effective.
-  Preparatory activities should be a regular fixture of your programme, offering your learners the opportunity to apply and develop their skills over time, ensuring continuous development so that they are as skilled as possible when they begin engaging with employers and seeking apprenticeships.
-  Ensure that basic skills are delivered in flexible and creative ways. This will make learning engaging and relevant to young people's lives and employment goals. This could be through contextualised activities or delivery in the workplace.
-  Consider recruiting staff with IAG qualifications or upskilling existing staff. This approach enables providers to offer effective information, advice and guidance and to offer strong support to work experience employers which contributes to good progression outcomes.
-  Focus on securing work experience with employers who are committed to having a real apprenticeship or job vacancy available for a young person at the end of the placement. This approach is more likely to lead to a positive and quick employment outcome.

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TOP TIPS

- 💡 Engage local organisations that provide access to a range of employers, for example trade organisations or employer federations. This increases access to work experience placements as well as other forms of engagement with employers
- 💡 Help the young person prepare, by thinking about what interview questions might be asked, considering their answers and practising a mock interview.
- 💡 Be clear with employers about what is required from them when providing work experience opportunities; especially if there are expectations for them to identify an apprenticeship or employment opportunity for young people who complete their work experience.
- 💡 Ensure your delivery model allows you to spend sufficient time with a young person prior to them starting the programme. This is important in enabling you to understand their needs, strengths and weaknesses and to build up trust. It will also enable you to plan an effective programme for each young person from the beginning.



Evaluating your programme



Evaluation is about making an assessment about the value and quality of the pre-apprenticeship. Good quality evaluation will not only provide feedback on the effectiveness of the programme but will also help to determine whether the programme is appropriate for the target group and whether there are any problems that need to be resolved.

TOP TIPS

- 💡 To make sure your evaluation is robust, you should develop an evaluation plan. This will ensure that evaluation is embedded in your programme and captures the information you need from the beginning. The plan should include the following:
 - Why you are evaluating the programme
 - What you will be evaluating
 - How you will evaluate it
 - When you will evaluate it
- 💡 To understand the success of your pre-apprenticeship programme, you should consider collecting and analysing monitoring information on referral routes into the programme, the number of participants, the number of completers, key participant characteristics, e.g. gender and ethnicity, time spent with each participant and apprenticeship and outcomes of participants. You can maximise effectiveness by linking the initial assessment of young people to ongoing programme monitoring and evaluation.

Visit our [interactive guide](#) for detailed advice and guidance on designing and delivering your pre-apprenticeship programme.

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