



# SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT APPRENTICESHIP

## A GUIDE FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP EMPLOYER OR TRAINING PROVIDER

### INTRODUCTION

This guide sets out what employers and providers should consider when designing and developing their apprenticeship programme, matching a suitable candidate and providing ongoing support.

Apprenticeships offer an exciting option for both apprentices and employers. Apprentices can be employed at all levels, from school leavers to individuals who want to further their careers or change career direction completely or they may be a member of your current workforce you wish to develop and progress.

Apprentices get the opportunity to get hands-on experience whilst they are training and getting paid a salary. They are treated just like all other employees, with a contract of employment and holiday leave.

Apprentices will spend at least 20% of their time on

off-the-job training with the chosen training provider. Apprenticeships offer the opportunity to have a flexible, but structured training programme that meets the organisation's needs.

Aimed at developing apprentices to be fully competent in the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for a specific occupational role, apprenticeships are being developed, approved and added all the time which means there is an increasing choice.

An apprenticeship is a job with training and support which can be designed and delivered flexibly to meet the needs of all involved. The successful delivery of an apprenticeship depends on choosing the right package of training and support, and the contribution from three partners: the apprentice; employer; and the training provider, which could be a college, university or independent training provider.

Choosing and developing the right apprenticeship programme is a significant decision and one which needs to be made carefully by all involved. Apprentices who go on the wrong programme for them are more likely to disengage, or even withdraw altogether. Choosing the right apprenticeship for the job role and for an individual ensures they can build the essential skills to benefit their career, and your business.

## WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME?

### 1. Define the job role

Ensure you have defined the job role and have a clear understanding of what you will require from your apprentice. Job titles are helpful but rarely describe the role - avoid choosing the apprenticeship based solely on the job title.

Together with your training provider map the job role to any relevant apprenticeship standards to identify the standard that best fits the job role. Don't forget apprenticeships are designed for individual occupational roles. For example, the job title may be Customer Services Adviser but depending on the role, the apprenticeship standard could be junior estate agent, customer service practitioner, financial services customer adviser or another alternative. By comparing the job role against the apprenticeship standards, you will be able to identify if the knowledge, skills and behaviours the apprenticeship will develop are the right ones and fit with the business needs.

Consider where the job role could lead an apprentice to in future, are there progression routes that you can describe which will help a candidate understand if this apprenticeship will help them to achieve their longer-term career ambitions.

### 2. Design the programme with the training provider to fit your business and apprentice needs

The employer and training provider can creatively develop a programme which is tailored to both the needs of the business and the apprentice for example this could include:

- ensuring the delivery method and style of learning is suitable for the apprentice, meeting any specific learning needs they may have
- developing a learning plan which allows the 20% of the job training to be undertaken around peak working periods etc
- altering the apprenticeship duration to account for part-time working patterns

The apprentice must achieve the competence in the knowledge, skills and behaviours and any other mandatory requirements as detailed in the chosen apprenticeship standard however, if the job role requires wider knowledge, skills and behaviours your training provider can also help to embed this within the programme.

### 3. Plan and prepare support for the apprentice

There are a range of support needs and or challenges an apprentice may face, just like any other employee or student. Throughout the apprenticeship the apprentice will need to be actively supported by both the employer and the training provider.

These support needs and the way in which an employer and training provider can assist with these should be considered and planned from the outset. This could include support with matters related to employment and careers, learning and development, finances and health and well-being.

Training providers will have good experience in supporting students and apprentices and therefore will in many cases have established practices and resources which can help. Training providers may wish to consider reviewing their support offer using the Apprentice Support Checklist.

In addition to the usual supervisory and management duties an employer will need to coach and mentor the apprentice to help them develop during their on-the-job and off-the-job training and progress in their role and career. The employer will need to decide on how and who will do this and make this clear to the apprentice. An apprentice should have a line manager or supervisor and in some cases they may be assigned a workplace mentor or 'buddy'. Regular reviews with your apprentice will provide you with the opportunity to identify any specific challenges an apprentice may be facing. Identifying an issue and offering appropriate support may well just make the difference between a demotivated, disengaged apprentice at risk of withdrawing and a motivated, happy and successful apprenticeship achiever.

It may also be useful to prepare other colleagues who will be working with the apprentice. For example to clarify the apprentice's role, reasonable and appropriate tasks for them to undertake, and the support they may need.

Line managers of apprentices may wish to refer to our guide for Line Managers Guide to Apprenticeships for hints tips and considerations on what they will need to do throughout the apprentice's programme.

### 4. Choose the right candidate

In addition to your job description you might also want to consider a person specification. Is there any essential and/or desirable knowledge, previous experience or specific skills you're looking for in the successful candidate?

Consider how you are going to recruit your apprentice(s), including whether your training provider could support you to identify the most suitable candidate.

If you are recruiting to a junior or entry position which is likely to attract new entrants to the workforce or industry, think about how you will test candidates' interest, enthusiasm and suitability for working in your industry:

- Could you offer an open day, preparation day or even some taster sessions to allow a prospective apprentice to get a better understanding of the industry and requirements of the job role? Using approaches such as these alongside your normal recruitment processes application and interview can help you to match the best candidate(s) to the apprenticeship(s) on offer. [link to case study below]
- Do you have a member of staff who has successfully achieved an apprenticeship or training programme within your organisation and can talk to candidates sharing their experiences and answering any questions?
- In addition to your usual recruitment practices the training provider could offer a comprehensive careers information, advice and guidance interview supporting the candidate to fully consider their options and their suitability for your industry / role.

Prepare your recruitment process not only to allow you to learn about the candidate(s) but help the candidate learn about you, the organisation, the job role, the training they will be undertaking and where this might take them. This all helps to ensure that the apprenticeship is the right choice for the apprentice and for your business.

## CANDIDATES ARE ALSO MAKING CHOICES

For those at the start of their career, wanting to change career direction, or returning to work after a break, there are hundreds of different apprenticeships to choose from. Choosing an apprenticeship will include making decisions about:

- Which industry / occupational role?
- At what level?
- Which employer? – people, culture and values, contractual terms, location etc
- Which training provider? – training delivery style, location, support, expertise etc.
- Will this be the best programme to allow them to further progress and achieve their career ambitions?
- Salary and employment package

Providing candidates with information on these from the outset will help them to decide whether your apprenticeship vacancy is a suitable one for them.

Accessing high-quality careers information, advice and guidance can be helpful to candidates in better understanding their career interests, options and choices. You can direct your candidates to the [National Careers Service](#) which provides an impartial careers information, advice and guidance service available to all. In addition, [Amazing Apprenticeships](#) provides a range of creative resources to inform and inspire future apprentices.

### CASE STUDY:

### RECRUITMENT PROCESSES AND MATCHING

The House of Commons Apprenticeship Scheme has introduced preparation days into their recruitment process to match apprentices to the right vacancy for them.

Approximately 10-15 candidates per apprenticeship are invited to a preparation day. During the day candidates are given a tour of Parliament and their offices and an overview of their team. They receive information about flexible working hours, options for working and studying from home, on programme support, and wider benefits packages. Apprenticeship candidates meet members of the interview panel and are given the opportunity to ask questions about the apprenticeship role, the learning component and working conditions. Candidates are also given a steer on the questions that will be asked at interview and what to wear for interview.

After the opportunity to explore the role and the work of the team, some candidates decide that the apprenticeship opportunity is not suitable for them, either prior to interview or within a few weeks in role. If these candidates are still interested in a career in Parliament and another suitable vacancy is open, then they are given the opportunity to join another preparation day in a different team.

*"If it's the right fit for the business and the right fit for the apprentice, then we are more than happy to make the change."*

Preparation days have contributed to a better matching of candidates to apprenticeships, an improved recruitment process and a significantly reduced apprentice drop-out rate.

## CASE STUDY:

### PREPARING FOR ASSESSMENT DAYS

St. John's Ambulance (SJA) provides first aid supplies, ambulance services and first aid volunteers. The recruitment of apprentices is managed by their apprenticeships training provider who selects candidates who are suitable for the workplace trainer role. The candidates are prepared by mentors from the provider for the SJA assessment day. The preparation activities include responding to a mock first aid situation, advance notice of the interview questions, and help to prepare a presentation about their interest in first aid training. The preparation work has resulted in more effective assessment days, with knowledgeable and confident candidates, who are sure of their interest in first aid training.

Those who are already in the workforce or have experience of working in the industry and wish to develop and progress will be considering their options and making decisions for example:

- Will the employer actively support them to achieve the apprenticeship?
- How will the job role differ, will they have the opportunities for the hands-on-experience needed to achieve the apprenticeship?
- Concerns about not undertaking any formal education or learning for some years and their capability of learning and being assessed or tested

Line managers and providers should have detailed conversations with these staff to explore any issues and concerns they may have to ensure that they are also committed to the apprenticeship. Explaining the programme in detail, the support available from both the employer and training provider and what they can do if they have any concerns will be essential.

## GETTING STARTED AND DURING THE PROGRAMME

At the start of the apprenticeship, the apprentice, employer and training provider will be required to agree and sign a [commitment statement](#). This statement explains what everyone has to do to make sure the apprenticeship goes to plan. The commitment statement will cover:

- What the training will consist of and a schedule of when it will happen
- Details of what each partner is committing to deliver
- How to handle queries or resolve complaints

It is much easier for all, if concerns are identified at the outset of the programme. Employers should each carefully review the statement ensuring this accurately reflects your contributions and commitments and, allow sufficient time to discuss any questions, concerns or clarifications with the training provider and apprentice

before the statement is signed.

At the start of the apprenticeship it's a good idea to focus on the induction activities. These activities should not only inform and educate the apprentice about the business and their apprenticeship programme but, also set clear goals and expectations of their contribution to the workplace. If an apprentice is comfortable and feels they are having a positive contribution, they are likely to become engaged much quicker and feel more committed to the business.

It is also important that the employer and apprentice are engaged early about the end-point assessment (EPA). Thinking about the assessment from the outset will help you both to prepare and work towards the requirements of the EPA but can also be useful in calming any concerns or fears. The end-point assessment organisation will be able to provide information and advice on what to expect from the EPA - either directly to the employer and the apprentice or via the training provider at the beginning of the programme.

Throughout the programme the employer will be actively supporting the apprentice and providing them with regular feedback. Feedback is crucial for all employees however, offering regular feedback and reviews with the apprentice will continually aid their progression on their apprenticeship and within the business. This also provides the opportunity for employers to receive feedback and identify any concerns apprentices may have with their programme.

## AND FINALLY, WHAT IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH THE APPRENTICESHIP?

Don't worry, there are plenty of options for all involved. If you have developed and embedded a culture of supporting your apprentices you are likely to identify concerns as part of your regular day to day working and reviews. If there is a problem, there will almost certainly be options that you, the training provider and / or apprentice can consider to resolve these and support continuation and completion. For example, if you identified a problem related to:

- *Time management and the requirements of the apprenticeship* – your training provider will be able to advise you whether the scheduling and milestones for the apprenticeship can be altered, perhaps a break from the apprenticeship would be beneficial or a part-time model could be considered.
- *The apprentice is finding the programme too easy or too difficult* – exploring this with the training provider will help to understand if this is an issue. The training provider could offer some additional support, or add further challenging training content to ensure your apprentice is being stretched.
- *The apprentice is questioning if the apprenticeship will support their career aspirations and disengaging* – If at the outset you set out the potential progression routes following completion of the apprenticeship it might be beneficial to have a conversation with your apprentice about these. In addition, your training provider will be able to help with providing regular careers advice which can help to clarify where the apprenticeship might lead.

It may be that the apprenticeship programme can be changed or even the chosen apprenticeship standard swapped if there is an alternative job role.

If following attempts to resolve the issue, the apprentice feels they have made the wrong decision and the apprenticeship is not the right programme the training provider may be able to help them explore the possibility of switching employer, industry and/or apprenticeship standard.



#### **CASE STUDY:**

#### **'SWAP DON'T DROP'**

Buxton and Leek College introduced the 'Swap Don't Drop' campaign that encourages students and apprentices to change programme rather than drop-out. The college encourages apprentices who feel they may have taken the wrong direction to explore the possibility of switching employer, industry or course type. Apprentices in this situation can access a range of support including meetings with a careers adviser or college mentor in their area of interest; a work experience placement or work trial; and opportunities to trial different classes at the college.

*"Swap Don't Drop takes the stigma away from making a choice that wasn't right. If someone is starting to think that their apprenticeship isn't right, they may also be starting to think that it is another failure, but by having a universal campaign...it's just a normal thing that we do at college and it gives you a chance to see what the alternatives are."*

## **APPRENTICESHIP HELPLINE**

If you have any further questions about supporting an apprentice to choose the right apprenticeship you can contact the Apprenticeship Helpline:

[nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 0800 015 0400  
8am to 10pm, 7 days a week

