

## **What are Apprenticeships?**

An apprenticeship is a job with training which allows people to earn while they learn. On an apprenticeship, your young person will be working towards gaining a nationally recognised qualification. Apprenticeships include elements of on the job and off the job training, meeting specific employer-led standards. Apprenticeships are available across a whole range of sectors, from administration to engineering through to health and social care, retail, manufacturing and IT.

Once the apprenticeship has ended, there is often the opportunity to gain employment or promotion with the employer where the young person has completed the apprenticeship.

### **A short history**

Apprenticeship reforms have been underway in England since October 2013. Groups of employers, known as 'trailblazers' have been working together to design new, world-class apprenticeship standards that respond to the needs of their industries.

Work has happened to ensure all new apprenticeships are based on modern standards. The quality has been improved through higher expectations in English and maths and more rigorous testing to ensure the apprentice is fully competent. Grading at the end of the apprenticeship has also been introduced.

In 2019/20, there were 719,000 people participating in an apprenticeship in England, with 322,500 apprenticeship starts and 146,900 apprenticeship achievements. Note, though, there has been a slight drop in apprenticeships due to the pandemic.

The way apprenticeships have been funded has changed due to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. Since April 2017 employers with a pay bill in excess of £3 million are subject to a national apprenticeship levy. This levy is 0.5% of their pay bill minus an apprenticeship levy allowance of £15,000 per financial year. The funds generated by the levy have to be spent on apprenticeship training costs. The government tops up the funds paid by the employer by 10%.

Money from this levy that is not used is placed in a 'national pot' and employers with a wage bill of less than £3 million can apply to use it to set up their own apprenticeships.

Therefore, with this incentive for organisations to use the levy, this is an exciting time for apprenticeships. These changes have meant that their profile has been raised significantly.

### **The benefits of the apprenticeship programmes**

The apprenticeships programme provides proven benefits. For apprentices, it can equip them with the skills, knowledge and experience needed to pursue a successful career.

Benefits:

- Working alongside studying will mean that your young person will be able to directly practice what they are learning in the workplace.
- Your young person's employer will pay for the costs of studying.

- Your young person will have gained valuable work experience, leading to them possessing skills and knowledge that can be used across a range of jobs and industries.

Recent statistics from the most recent Apprentice Panel Survey (<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/reviews-and-consultations/reports/apprentice-panel-survey-august-2020/>), published in August 2020 found that 87% of respondents would recommend their apprenticeship to others who wish to train in that occupation.

### **The different levels of apprenticeships**

Study programmes and traineeships – Level 1 - This is aimed at individuals who have just left school and are looking for some knowledge of their preferred sector and some hands-on experience. This level takes around 4-12 months and is not a paid apprenticeship, but all training is free of charge and expenses can be claimed back.

Intermediate – Level 2 – equivalent to 5 GCSE passes at grades A\* - C or 9-4

Advanced – Level 3 – equivalent to 2 A level passes

Higher – Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 – equivalent to a foundation degree or above

Degree – Levels 6 and 7 – equivalent to a Bachelor's or Master's degree.

Degree apprenticeships mean that your young person will have the chance to get a university degree and they will not have to pay the fees. An article has been written by Prospects on the subject of whether to go to university or to do an apprenticeship: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/apprenticeships/should-i-go-to-university-or-do-an-apprenticeship>

### **Where can I find out more?**

For more information about apprenticeships take a look at our 'Higher and Degree Apprenticeships' article. It's good to look at the whole range of options, so you can also look at our article on 'Traineeships and the Kickstart Scheme.'

Note: much of the information above is directed at young people who are based in England, however there are similar schemes in the rest of the UK and you can find out more at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>  
<https://www.apprenticeships.scot>  
<https://careerswales.gov.wales/apprenticeships>  
<https://toolkit.wisecampaign.org.uk/apprenticeship-toolkit/about/apprenticeships-in-scotland-wales-and-northern-ireland>  
<https://www.directlineforbusiness.co.uk/public-liability-insurance/knowledge-centre/tools-of-the-trade/apprenticeships-around-the-uk>

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