

An employer's guide to apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way for businesses to increase productivity and boost skills, as well as helping to address the skills shortages right across the food & drink industry. By combining practical workplace training with off-the-job learning, Apprenticeships are designed to equip individuals with the skills and knowledge they need to add real value to your organisation.

And they're available from GCSE level to Degree

Name	Level	Equivalent	Food & drink examples
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes	Baker, Butcher, Fishmonger, Food & Drink Process Operator
Advanced	3	2 A Level passes	Advanced Baker, Food & Drink Advanced Process Operator, Food & Drink Maintenance Engineer & Food Technologist
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above	Brewer, Advanced Dairy Technologist
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree	Food & Drink Advanced Engineer, Food Industry Technical Professional, Packaging Professional

Visit the IfA website for a comprehensive list of the specific standards available at each level.



How do Apprenticeships work?

Most of the time, an Apprentice will be just like another member of the team, working and learning 'on the job'. But at least 20 % of their paid time should be dedicated to off-the-job learning – advancing their knowledge and giving them skills they can bring back to the workplace.

What is off-the-job learning?

This is any new learning that contributes to the development of the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the standard. This can be delivered through a variety of methods, including:

- Distance learning - study conducted online through video lectures, online learning etc.
- Blended learning - the combination of different learning methods, such as face-to-face and online learning
- Block release - an extended period of study either at the beginning or part way through training.

The specific way training is delivered is up to the Apprentice, employer and training provider to discuss and agree – however it must be conducted with the Apprentice's paid working hours.

The rest of the Apprentice's time will be spent at work learning the role and putting into practice everything they learn – all supported and nurtured by their workplace mentor.

How is it assessed?

An EPA (End Point Assessment) is designed to test that the Apprentice has gained the expected skills,

knowledge and behaviours – and grades them accordingly.

Their EPA is made up of a number of elements, which can include an observation, knowledge tests, a project, a presentation, a professional discussion or production of a portfolio etc. depending on the requirements of the Apprenticeship.

It's delivered by an independent EPA organisation, chosen by the employer and generally takes place within the last 12 weeks of the programme.

Who are they for?

There's a common misconception that Apprenticeships are only for young people. But they are in fact available to anyone living in England over the age of 16, provided they are not in full-time education.

Apprenticeships don't have to be used for new employees. They can also be used to upskill or retrain existing staff, as long as the programme gives them new competency skills for their role – rather than just certifying skills they already have.

What are the benefits?

- Employers with Apprenticeship programmes reported a 76 % increase in productivity
- Businesses can grow their own talent
- Leads to an increasingly skilled and qualified workforce
- Improved quality of products and services
- Increased employee satisfaction and motivation
- Reduced staff turnover and recruitment costs



Responsibilities as an employer

The role

The job an Apprentice is employed to do must be a genuine job that has opportunities to gain the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to complete the Apprenticeship.

The role must be available for long enough for the Apprentice to complete their programme.

Contracting

Employers must provide their Apprentices with a 'Contract of Employment' as they would for any other member of staff. It must cover the time it will take the Apprentice to complete their programme.

Once an Apprentice has completed their Apprenticeship, the employer has the opportunity to renew their contract and take them on full time.

Pay

If an Apprentice is under 19 or over 19 but in the first year of their Apprenticeship, they're entitled to the 'Apprenticeship Wage'.

If the Apprentice is over 19 and has completed the first year of their Apprenticeship, they can no longer be paid the 'Apprenticeship Wage' and must be paid the minimum wage for their age group.

An employer must pay their Apprentice for all of their contracted hours, including the time they spend completing their 'off-the-job' training.

Employers are free to pay Apprentices more than their minimum entitlement if they choose to.

Visit gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates for more info about paying Apprentices.

The Training Provider and End Point Assessment Organisation

As an employer you must choose a training provider from the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) – who must also be registered to deliver that specific Apprenticeship you're looking for.

The End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) should be chosen from the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO). It's common for training providers to have a relationship with an EPAO, but employers are free to choose any EPAO they please.

The overall cost of the training, including the End Point Assessment (EPA) must be discussed and agreed upon with the training provider.

Note: It is a requirement of the funding rules for the training cost to take prior learning into account. Therefore training providers cannot enforce fixed prices if an employer can justify a reduction based on prior learning.

Documentation

The following documentation must be in place at the start of the Apprenticeship:

- An 'Apprenticeship Agreement' between the employer and Apprentice – outlines the terms of the Apprenticeship, including length of employment, the nature of the training the Apprentice will receive, the conditions of work and the qualifications they are working towards (if applicable).
- A 'Commitment Statement' signed by the Apprentice, employer and training provider

- outlines planned content and schedule for training, the expectations of each party and how complaints and queries will be addressed. The training provider is responsible for this document.

- Evidence of the Apprentice's eligibility to work and their average working hours – this evidence must be given to the training provider at the start of the Apprenticeship.

Funding and The Levy

The Apprenticeship may be paid for either through a company's Levy contributions or they can be 90 % government funded. This will depend on the organisation's pay bill.

Levy paying employers

The Levy is a form of tax that can be claimed back to fund Apprenticeship training and includes a 10 % top up from the government. It was introduced as part of the government reforms to increase skills development across UK industries. It also gives employers control of their Apprenticeship training including the cost. **Any employer with a pay bill of £3million or more per year must pay into the Levy.**

Although the Levy is mandatory for those who meet the criteria, it is not mandatory to claim the money back for training. However if you don't use it, you lose it because it will get reallocated to other apprentices if you do not spend it after 24 months.

An employer's Levy funds are paid monthly. So the funding provided in month one will be there until month 24, and the funding provided in month two will be there until month 25 etc.

An employer must report and pay their Levy bill to the HMRC. They can then access their funds through a digital service using a PAYE scheme.

You can find out more information about the Levy at nsafd.co.uk.

Non-Levy paying employers

If an employer has a pay bill of less than £3million per year, they are not required to pay the Levy. As a result at least, 90 % of the cost of the Apprenticeship training will be paid for by the government and the additional 10 % needs to be paid by the employer.

The employer will pay their contribution directly to the training provider.

Additional funding

There are a number of additional funding and payment options available for those who meet certain criteria:

- An employer doesn't have to pay National Insurance Contributions for any Apprentice under the age of 25, who earns less than £43,000 per year
- If an Apprentice is trained when they are 16-18 years old, both the employer and provider are entitled to £1,000 each
- If an apprentice between 19 and 24 years old has previously been part of a local authority education, health and care plan, or has been in care the employer and provider will get a £1,000 payment.