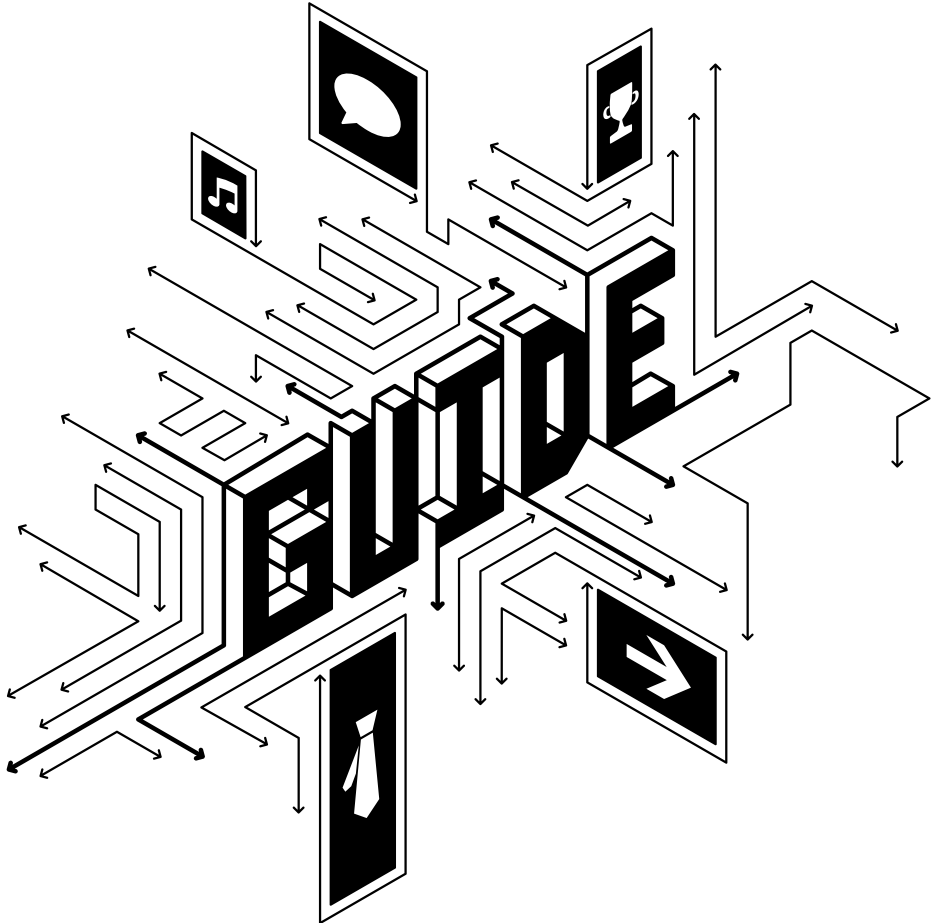


# The essential guide to apprenticeship support



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National  
Apprenticeship  
Service

# The Essential Guide to Apprenticeship Support

**The National Apprenticeship Service (part of the Department for Education) is committed to making sure apprenticeships are open and available to all individuals. This means making sure the right level of support is available to remove barriers to education and training, so that learners can make the most of their potential.**

This leaflet is for individuals who are considering applying for an apprenticeship, and current apprentices. The information may also be useful for parents, carers and other groups who offer advice and guidance.

**If you are looking for more information on what an apprenticeship is, and the benefits, please look at our [‘A guide to apprenticeships’](#) leaflet.**

- Are you thinking about starting an apprenticeship but have lots of questions about what you are entitled to and what support is available?
- Have you just started your apprenticeship, or been on your programme for a while but don't know where to find the information you need?
- Find out all the apprenticeship essentials you need to know in this accessible guide where you can follow the links for further details.

## What sort of apprenticeship should I do?

If you are unsure what apprenticeship to apply for, or if an apprenticeship is the right choice for you, you may wish to contact the National Careers Service for advice.

The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance across England to help you make decisions on learning, training and work. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, and is supported by qualified careers advisers. There are many ways to contact the National Careers Service, including webchat and telephone. You can visit their [website](#) for more information.

To find out more about the types of apprenticeship available, why not have a look at the National Apprenticeship Service [YouTube channel](#) where you can watch apprenticeship case study videos. You can also view an A to Z list of current apprenticeships on offer on [GOV.UK](#).

You can start an apprenticeship at intermediate, advanced, higher or degree level. Usually the level you start at depends on your existing levels of qualifications and your work experience. Once you have completed your apprenticeship there may be an opportunity for you to progress to the level above, and continue to build upon your knowledge and experience.

## What level of apprenticeships are there?

All apprenticeships include elements of on and off the job training leading to industry recognised standards or qualifications. Some apprenticeships also require an assessment at the end of the programme to assess the apprentice's ability and competence to do their job.

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes at grade A*– C or 9 – 4
Advanced	3	2 A level passes / Level 3 Diploma / International Baccalaureate
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

### Entry requirements

Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16, living in England. All vacancies on Find an apprenticeship will clearly state what the entry requirements are for the job role being advertised. There will be different entry requirements depending on the industry, job role and apprenticeship level.

Recent changes to the minimum English and maths requirements mean that people with a learning difficulty or disability can now access a level 2 intermediate apprenticeship as long as they can achieve an Entry Level 3 qualification during their apprenticeship. British Sign Language (BSL) has also been introduced as an alternative to English Functional Skills for those who have BSL as their first language.

A Disability Confident Employer will generally offer an interview to any applicant that declares they have a disability and meets the minimum criteria as defined by the employer. For more details, search 'Disability Confident' on GOV.UK.

### Is there support available to help improve my English, maths and IT Skills?

If you feel you would benefit from improving your English, maths and IT skills before you apply for an apprenticeship you can search for a course on the [National Careers Service course finder](#) or call the helpline on 0800 100 900.

If you're over 16 and you've left school, you normally don't have to pay to do:

- English or maths to GCSE level
- Some [information and communication technology \(ICT\)](#) courses
- English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)

If there is a fee, you may be able to get [Discretionary Learner Support](#).

You can do courses at:

- further education colleges
- adult education centres
- some libraries
- other training providers

### Where do I look for an apprenticeship?

You can 'get in and go far' with an apprenticeship at some of Britain's biggest and brightest companies. With so many opportunities on offer, you can find the apprenticeship that is right for you. Applying is easy.

Visit [Find an apprenticeship](#) on GOV.UK, create your account and you are ready to apply. Some employers may advertise vacancies on their own website.

Once you have registered on Find an apprenticeship, you can set up email and text alerts about new apprenticeship vacancies that may interest you.

You can find more information including videos of current apprentices and details of how to apply on the Find an apprenticeship recruitment site is available at [gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship).

If you would like to view more information on a selection of well-known employers, you can visit the vacancy snapshot at [amazingapprenticeships.com](http://amazingapprenticeships.com). It displays a range of employer fact files outlining the types of apprenticeship vacancies available at these prestigious companies across the year. If you have a specific interest in a certain employer it is also worth going direct to their recruitment site.

### What support is available to help with the application process?

If you encounter any problems with Find an apprenticeship you can contact the National Apprenticeship helpdesk by telephone (0800 0150 400) or by email at [nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk)

If you would like help writing your application, the [National Careers Service](#) can support you.

You might also like to take a look at the '[How to write a winning apprenticeship application](#)' booklet produced by the National Apprenticeship Service.

### What is the role of my training provider?

Your training provider has a key role to play in providing off-the-job training, assessing your progress towards achieving your qualifications and supporting you generally during your apprenticeship. They work very closely with your employer to ensure that you receive:

- an induction programme on starting
- a detailed training plan (including on-the-job training)

- regular progress reviews
- opportunities to put into practice off-the-job learning so that you can achieve your qualifications/requirements of the apprenticeship
- mentoring and general support throughout your apprenticeship

This will all be documented in a commitment statement that is part of the Apprenticeship Agreement. This is an individual learning plan that your provider, your employer and you will all sign up to.

You can find out more about learner satisfaction with training organisations and colleges by accessing the learner satisfaction survey results on the FE Choices pages of [GOV.UK](#).

If you are working towards an apprenticeship standard, you must take an independent assessment at the end of your training to confirm that you have achieved occupational competence. Rigorous, robust and independent end-point assessment (EPA) is essential to give employers confidence that you can actually perform in the occupation you have been trained in and can demonstrate the duties, and knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard.

EPA can take a wide range of forms – it can include assessment methods such as an observation in the workplace, written tests and interviews. It must include a minimum of two separate assessment methods.

### What is the role of my employer?

Your employer has an essential part to play in developing and delivering your apprenticeship programme. As well as off-the-job training (provided by your training provider), you will receive on-the-job training from your manager and other work colleagues.

Where it is possible, in addition to your line manager, you should also have a workplace mentor. Your mentor should be a colleague who you can talk to in confidence about your apprenticeship, and who should support you to raise concerns or make suggestions to improve your experience. In very small organisations, it is sometimes not possible to do this. In these circumstances, you should raise any worries, ideas, or issues with your training provider.

If you work for a large employer where there is a union, you may be able to get some additional support from your union representative or your [union learning](#) representative.

### What is my employment status as an apprentice?

An apprenticeship is a real job. Under all circumstances, you should be employed from day one.

On starting your apprenticeship, you will sign an apprenticeship agreement. In most instances, this will be directly with your employer but in some cases, if you have started an apprenticeship with an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA), your ATA then acts as your legal employer and the contract of employment will be with them. If you are employed by an ATA you can check that they are on the [national register](#).

You must have a contract of employment which is long enough to complete the apprenticeship successfully.

You must also have a job role and receive appropriate support to provide the opportunity to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve the apprenticeship.

### What should I be paid?

Levels of starting salaries for apprentices are variable and are dependent on many factors such as:

- the level of apprenticeship you apply for
- the sector you are working in e.g. engineering, retail, health care, sciences etc
- the type of employer you are working for e.g. small business, large corporation, public or private sector
- your age, experience and existing qualifications

The National Minimum Wage for apprentices is £3.70 per hour, but many employers pay more than this. This rate applies to apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in the first year of their apprenticeship

The National Minimum Wage for apprentices usually changes annually on the 1st April.

You must be paid at least the [National Minimum Wage](#) or National Living Wage rate for your age if you are an apprentice aged 19 or over, and have completed your first year.

Some apprentices may start at the minimum level but can quickly increase their salary as they become more competent in their job role. Starting salaries for lots of apprenticeships are much higher than the minimum.

If you believe you are being underpaid you can contact [ACAS](#) for advice.

### What holidays am I entitled to?

Your holiday entitlement should be clearly written into your contract of employment.

As a minimum you should get at least 20 days paid holiday per year plus bank holidays.

You can use the [holiday calculator](#) on GOV.UK to check your minimum holiday entitlement.

### How many hours per week should I be working?

#### Minimum Working Hours

The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on you working 30 hours a week or more, including any off-the-job training undertaken. You must work enough hours each week so that they can undertake sufficient, regular training and on-the-job activity.

The time spent on off-the-job training should be at least 20% and should be included as part of your hours. Your employer must allow you time to complete your apprenticeship within your working hours. If you need support with English and maths this should also be within working hours.

#### Maximum Working Hours

The European Working Time Directive states that young people aged up to 18 can work for maximum of 40 hours per week and not more than 8 hours per day. Those aged over 18 have maximum working hours of 48 hours per week but they can sign an agreement with their employer, should they wish to opt out of the protection provided by the Working Time Directive.

#### Duration

An apprenticeship takes between one and five years to complete. The duration of an apprenticeship depends on age, prior skills, apprenticeship type/level, and sector.

If you are already claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits before starting your apprenticeship, you may still be eligible to claim these to help with your living costs. This will depend on your personal circumstances. Visit the [GOV.UK](#) website to find out how to check your eligibility.

### Can I complete an apprenticeship working part-time?

Yes. Where a part-time working pattern is required, the duration of the apprenticeship will be extended to allow enough time to complete the apprenticeship successfully. For example, people with caring responsibilities or a disability may need to agree a part time programme.

You, your employer and the training provider must all agree the revised duration of your apprenticeship.

Depending on your circumstances, you may still be eligible to claim Universal Credit or Tax Credits to help with your living costs. Visit the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website to find out how to check your eligibility.

### What is the duration and employment hours of an apprenticeship?

The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on the apprentice working 30 hours a week or more, including any off-the-job training they undertake.

An apprentice with a zero-hours contract must be allowed to complete their apprenticeship in their working hours, including the off-the-job training. Where this is not possible, you must record a break in the apprenticeship.

### Can I get help with travel costs?

When you undertake an apprenticeship, you must ensure you are able to travel to and from your place of work and training provider, and cover the associated costs. On Find an apprenticeship, the estimated journey times are shown on the vacancies.

There are a number of different schemes available to support you financially while you are looking for an apprenticeship, and for when you have found one.

[Jobcentre Plus](#) provides financial assistance for the unemployed (claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit), towards travel costs, which are incurred when seeking or starting, work.

You may qualify for:

- Access to discounted travel through the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card scheme. This is run by participating Rail and Bus companies and entitles the cardholder to a 50% discount on participating routes. It is currently available to those unemployed claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit for 3-to-9 months (18-to-24 year olds) or 3-to-12 months (over 25s). Other benefit recipients may receive a Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card from 3 months of their claim and if they are actively engaged with a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach. Speak to your work coach to find out more.
- Help with travel costs via the Jobcentre Plus Flexible support fund. This may be used at the discretion of the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach to help with the cost of travelling to an interview, training or for the first months of travelling to work if this would be a barrier which could prevent you from taking up the opportunity.

In some local authority areas, you may be entitled to a travel discount, such as the [apprentice Oyster photo card](#) in London.

You can check with your local public transport operator to see if there are similar schemes available in your local area.



## Am I able to claim student discount?

More and more businesses are offering discounts to apprentices, so it is always worth asking. Apprentices are entitled to an NUS card through the National Union of Students. The [NUS Apprentice extra discount card](#) costs £11 and offers apprentices many of the same discounts and benefits as other students including discounts on travel.

## Can I get any help with childcare expenses?

You may qualify for [help towards childcare costs](#) provided by the government.

## Can I get help with clothing and other expenses associated with working?

Support with clothing and other expenses is not widely available. However if you are claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit you may be able to get help with cost of work clothing and equipment to start work from the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support fund. Speak to your Work Coach before you start work to check your eligibility.

If you are currently in receipt of Universal Credit or Tax Credits, you may still be eligible to claim these to help with your living costs. Visit the [GOV.UK](#) website to find out how to check if you are eligible.

There are also charities like [Dress for Success](#) (for women) and [Suited and Booted](#) (for men) that offer free work clothes and advice on presenting yourself.

## What support can I get if I have learning difficulty or a disability?

The National Apprenticeship Service (part of the Department for Education) is committed to making sure apprenticeships are open and available to all individuals. This means making sure the right level of support is available to remove barriers to education and training, so that learners can make the most of their potential.

If you have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan or a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), or have had one in the past, there may be flexibility around the English and maths qualifications you would need to complete your apprenticeship. Please speak to your employer or training provider for more information.

As with any other job, you can request extra support known as 'reasonable adjustments' for help with the application process and for support on the apprenticeship itself (both at work and while studying).

The government provides extra funding to support apprentices with SEN. Payments of £1000 each are available for training providers and employers with apprentices aged 19-24 who have an EHC plan.

Training providers can also claim up to £150 per month (up to £1,800 per year) from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to meet the costs of providing additional support for learning or reasonable adjustments under the equality act for apprentices. In some cases, excess learning support of up to £19,000 is available.

### What mental health support is available to apprentices?

The free Supporting Apprentices service, delivered by Remploy and funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, is available to any apprentice who is experiencing mental health difficulties at work. It complements any existing occupational health service you have, delivered by trained professionals with expertise in mental health in the workplace.

Specialist advisors provide:

- emotional wellbeing support and advice for six months
- advice on simple workplace adjustments
- successful coping strategies
- a step-by-step support plan

You can reach the service on 0300 456 8210 and speak to one of the advisors, or email [apprentices@remploy.co.uk](mailto:apprentices@remploy.co.uk)

The [website](#) for the service includes stories from apprentices who have benefitted from its help.

Your local Jobcentre can help you find a job or gain new skills and tell you about disability-friendly employers in your area.

They can also refer you to a specialist work psychologist, if appropriate, or carry out an 'employment assessment', asking you about:

- your skills and experience
- what kind of roles you're interested in

You can ask the work coach at [your local Jobcentre](#).

Your work coach can also tell you about programmes and grants to help you back into work. These include:

Access to Work – [Access to Work](#) is a fund provided by the Department for Work and Pensions for help at work that isn't covered by an employer making reasonable adjustments. The support offered is based on a person's needs. An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help do things like answer the phone or go to meetings
- help getting to and from work

The money doesn't have to be paid back and won't affect other benefits.

### What support can I get if I am a care leaver?

If you are under 25 years old when you start an apprenticeship, and have previously been in the care of the local authority (for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14), you are eligible for some extra funding.

If you are starting your apprenticeship in August 2018 or later, you will receive a bursary payment of £1000, to help you to meet the extra costs of starting work and to support you in the first year of your apprenticeship. You won't need to repay this bursary.

Your employer and provider will also receive a payment to help offer additional support as you complete your apprenticeship.

More information is available in the [document](#) explaining apprenticeships funding from August 2018.

You should also contact your local authority to see if any additional support is available to you.

## Who can I complain to if I am unhappy with any aspect of my apprenticeship?

Most apprentices are happy with the training and support they receive during their apprenticeship but, if you do experience problems or have any complaints, you should always raise these with your training provider or employer in the first instance.

They should have a written complaints procedure which you should follow. Once you have been through this process and you feel that your complaint is still not resolved you can then escalate the issue further by contacting the [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#). Access the link to find out more.

## What is a traineeship?

If you are 16 to 24 years old, and not quite ready for an apprenticeship and need some additional support, you could also consider a [traineeship](#). A traineeship is an education and training programme with work experience that unlocks the great potential of young people and prepares them for their future careers by helping them to become 'work ready'.

There is information on [GOV.UK](#) to help you decide if a traineeship is for you and you can look for traineeship opportunities on [Find a traineeship](#).

If you would like further advice you can contact the [National Careers Service](#) on 0800 100 900 or [use webchat](#).

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