Apprenticeship: FAQs

Can my apprentice start work straight away?
Yes; as long as they’re aged over 16 and not in any other work or formal education.

What are apprenticeships?
Apprenticeships give young people aged 16 plus and adult learners the chance to earn a wage while they train in a real job. It can take between one and four years to complete.

All apprenticeships have set content. However, employers can add extra content that meets their specific needs.

Most apprenticeships are offered in partnership with a training organisation (a college or learning provider).

Apprentices normally work at least 30 hours a week. However, an apprentice’s weekly hours can be reduced if their apprenticeship programme is extended.

An apprentice must receive the appropriate minimum wage. Find out more on the GOV.UK website.

Do apprentices get holidays?
Yes. Apprentices have the same holiday entitlements as other employees.

What’s the difference between an apprenticeship and an internship?
An internship is a kind of employment normally taken up by someone who’s just finished their studies (school, college or university) before they start their career. It can last between one month and one year, and involves an agreement to work set hours and complete specific pieces of work.

An apprenticeship is a way young people and adult learners can earn a wage while they train in a real job.

Why would I want to take on an apprentice?
Apprentices can benefit your business in a number of ways including better quality products and services, better staff morale and improved staff retention. They can also boost productivity, help you attract better staff and improve the image of your business in the sector.

What sort of work can an apprentice do?
Apprenticeships are available in over 1,500 job roles including project managers, care workers, advanced engineering construction. Apprenticeships start from intermediate level (equivalent to GCSEs) through to higher (equivalent to a degree).

Which industry sectors use Apprenticeships?
- Agriculture, horticulture and animal care
- Arts, media and publishing
- Business, administration and law
- Construction, planning and the built environment
- Education and training
- Engineering and manufacturing technologies
- Health, public services and care
Read case studies from a range of businesses that have used apprentices.

Can an existing employee become an apprentice?
Yes. A member of staff can become an apprentice if they need new knowledge and skills that can be provided through an apprenticeship.

What are my responsibilities as an employer?
You are legally obliged to have an apprenticeship agreement ready for when they start. That’s a signed agreement between the apprentice and their employer. It must be in place for the entire length of the apprenticeship. Employers must pay their apprentices the relevant minimum wage.

Find out more on the GOV.UK website.

How can I hire an apprentice?
The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) offers expert advice on apprenticeships to small- and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees. It can also connect SMEs with colleges and training providers. To access this support, SME employers can register their interest by completing our online form. You should receive a response within three working days.

Are Apprenticeships just for people who can’t go into higher education?
No. Apprenticeships are for anyone who wants to earn and learn at the same time. Higher Apprenticeships can include degrees.

Do I have to pay an apprentice?
Yes. You must pay at least the relevant national minimum wage set by the government through your usual payroll process.

Apprentices aged under 19, or in their first year, must be paid the apprentice minimum wage rate. Higher Apprentices, those over 19 or after their first year, must receive the minimum wage rate that applies to their age. In some cases, you may also contribute towards the cost of training. Find out more on the GOV.UK website.

How does the training part work?
Training is mostly offered through approved learning providers and colleges who will claim any apprenticeship funding to provide the learning and support the apprentice needs.

They can also help you by advertising your apprenticeship vacancies, supporting the recruitment process, offering training and assessment, and giving regular feedback on the apprentice’s performance.

Is an apprentice suitable for office work?
Yes. Apprenticeships are currently offered by employers in a range of office based roles such as:

- Accounting
- Banking
- Insurance
- Bookkeeping
What happens once an apprenticeship ends?
Once an apprenticeship finishes, the employer may extend the apprentice’s employment contract through progression into another role or a further apprenticeship (if appropriate).

There is no obligation for an employer to retain their apprentice. However, most apprentices do stay with their employer – only 14 per cent of London employers reported their apprentice had left after completing the apprenticeship.

How long does an apprenticeship last?
An apprenticeship is a minimum of one year, and can last up to four years.