

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

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LAST MODIFIED ON: 25/11/2020 - 10:03

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Whilst apprenticeships combine practical on-the-job training with study, traineeships combine work experience with work preparation training and English and mathematics provision for people who need more support before progressing into an apprenticeship or other employment.

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are paid jobs which incorporate substantial and sustained on- and off-the-job training. The term 'apprenticeship' has been legally protected by law since 2016, and in England, its definition is framed by four core principles:

- it is a job, in a skilled occupation
- it requires substantial and sustained training, lasting a minimum of 12 months and including off-the-job

training

- it leads to full competency in an occupation, demonstrated by the achievement of an apprenticeship standard, which is defined by employers
- it develops transferable skills, including English and maths.

Three levels of apprenticeship are available:

1. Intermediate Level Apprenticeships (equivalent to five GCSE passes at A*-C (or 9-4), and European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Level 3)
2. Advanced Level Apprenticeships (Level 3) (equivalent to two A-level passes and EQF Level 4).
3. Higher Apprenticeships (Levels 4 to 7) (EQF Levels 5 to 7)

Note: both general and vocational qualifications are grouped into levels within the [Regulated Qualifications Framework \(RQF\)](#), from entry level to level 8. The levels are mapped to the [European Qualifications Framework](#).

There is no upper age limit for undertaking an apprenticeship.

Previously, each apprenticeship had a framework which:

- covered all the statutory requirements for an apprenticeship programme
- was used by colleges, employers and training providers to make sure that all apprenticeship programmes are delivered consistently and therefore to national standards
- included the names of all qualifications and what each qualification is worth (its 'credit value')
- gave guidance on how to get onto an apprenticeship programme, the time it will take and career paths available after an apprenticeship.

As part of a series of reforms to apprenticeships, these frameworks are being replaced by apprenticeship standards. The frameworks are being designed by groups of employers for occupations in their respective sectors, describing the skills and knowledge that an apprentice needs to be fully competent in by the end of their apprenticeship. The [Apprenticeship trailblazer quality statement](#) (2017, Institute for Apprenticeships) provides information on the marks of quality applied to the apprenticeship standards.

As new standards are developed and approved, they are [published](#) by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#). The existing apprenticeship frameworks began to be withdrawn in March 2016, as the new standards have been developed and have become widely used. In 2018, the government [confirmed](#) that all frameworks will be withdrawn from 2020-2021 and replaced with employer-designed standards.

A department for Education [funding document](#) for apprenticeships released in July 2020 states:

We are committed to driving up the quality of apprenticeships and so from 1 August 2020, all new apprenticeship starts must be on standards. Apprenticeship frameworks will no longer be available to new starts, but learners will still be able to complete their framework, providing they started it on or before 31st July 2020. It is our intention that all apprentices who started an apprenticeship framework 6 before 1 August 2020 complete their apprenticeship framework by 31 July 2025 (accounting for any breaks in learning).

Ofsted, the education inspectorate, and Ofqual, the qualifications regulator, will continue to play a central role in monitoring the quality of apprenticeships: Ofsted through its inspection and reporting responsibilities and Ofqual through its role in ensuring that standards are maintained in the award of qualifications. Alternative assessment oversight arrangements may also be used in cases where employer groups have chosen not to use

qualifications regulated by Ofqual. As the number of degree apprenticeships has increased, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has taken on an apprenticeship quality monitoring role. In September 2020 Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, [announced](#) Ofsted will take over the inspection of degree apprenticeships (Level 6 and 7) from April 2021. This will make Ofsted the single body for the inspection of apprenticeship training at all levels.

The following quality requirements apply to reformed apprenticeships:

- Real employment – an apprentice must be employed in a job which has a real purpose. They will have a range of experience and additional enhancement opportunities that can help their future progression.
- Minimum hours of employment – this should be at least 30 hours per week. By exception, where the individual's circumstances or the particular nature of employment in a particular sector make this impossible, then an absolute minimum of 16 must be met. In such cases, the duration of the apprenticeship should be extended.
- The duration of the apprenticeship – this will be determined by the employer groups drafting the standards, but must be at least 12 months.
- Apprenticeship Agreement – a contract of service between the apprentice and the employer which confirms that the apprentice is undertaking an apprenticeship and which standard they will be following.
- English and Maths – where they don't have it already, all Level 2 apprentices must achieve Level 1 English and maths and take the test for Level 2, and all Level 3 apprentices must achieve Level 2.

A progress report on the [Apprenticeships Reform programme](#) in 2020 states the government has reached 69.6% of its target of 3 million new apprenticeships between 2015 and 2020. In the reporting period of 1 August 2018 to 31 July 2019 there was a total of 393,400 apprenticeship starts. This is an increase of 4.7% compared with 375,800 starts in the 2017/18 reporting period. There were 198,600 apprenticeship starts reported for the first two quarters of the 2019/20 academic year, compared with 214,200 reported at this time in 2018/19, a decrease of 7.3%.

In aiming to widen participation of people from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, the reforms have resulted in minor change: in 2018/19, 12.5% of starts were from people of BAME backgrounds, meaning that 48,400 BAME individuals entered the apprenticeship workforce.¹⁶ This is an increase on the 11.4% of starts that were made by BAME individuals in 2017/18, and means that we have achieved our BAME representation target before 2020. In the first two quarters of 2019/20 reported so far, 23,900 or 12.3%, of starts reported were made by people from BAME backgrounds.

A [release of summary statistics](#) on key apprenticeship learning data in England for the 2019/20 academic year showed the proportion of starts according to age:

- 16-18: 23.7 per cent (75,500)
- 19-24: 29.5 per cent (94,200)
- 25 and over: 46.8 per cent (149,300)

This release also gives an indication of the impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeships in 2020:

There have been 58,160 apprenticeship starts reported to date between 23 March and 31 July 2020, fewer than the 107,750 reported for this period at this point last year, a decrease of 46.0 per cent.

Wages for apprentices

Apprentices aged 16-18 are entitled to the apprentice minimum wage of £4.15 an hour. Apprentices are paid for both their normal working hours and the time they spend training as part of their apprenticeship. Apprentices aged 19 and over are also entitled to the £4.15 apprentice minimum wage in the first 12 months of their apprenticeship. After the first 12 months of their apprenticeship, people aged 19 and over are entitled to the age appropriate National Minimum Wage. See the article on ['Labour market situation in England'](#) for details of the National Minimum Wage.

As employees, apprentices are entitled to the same employment rights as other employees, including holiday entitlement and maternity leave.

Traineeships

Traineeships are education and training programmes with work experience which help young people become work ready. They are designed to help young people who do not yet have the appropriate skills or experience enter into an apprenticeship or employment. They are open to those aged 16 to 24 who are qualified below Level 3 (EQF Level 4), although they are not designed for the most disengaged young people who require specific and intensive support.

Traineeships last for a minimum of six weeks and can last up to a maximum of six months. Content is tailored to the individual's needs and includes:

- A work experience placement of 100 hours minimum (for benefit claimants, a maximum of 240 hours; this can be extended if a need is identified) which ensures young people can develop the skills, knowledge, confidence, attitudes and behaviours they need to succeed in employment.
- Work preparation training (for example writing CVs, interview preparation, job searching and interpersonal and communication skills) focusing on activities to help the learner progress to an apprenticeship or other employment.
- Maths and English support, if needed, to help them get the skills they need to boost their career prospects.

Learning providers and employers are able to add flexible additional elements to the content of their traineeships to meet both the needs of the labour market and the young person in question.

Traineeships are delivered as a partnership between employers and education and training providers. Training providers must have a contract with the [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#). Traineeships are not jobs and are therefore exempt from the National Minimum Wage. Employers are not required to pay young people for any work experience placement they undertake as part of their traineeship. However, since trainees are undertaking education and training, they could qualify for existing programmes of financial support, including the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, Free Meals, and Learning and Learner Support arrangements for 19 to 24 year olds.

Following the publication of the government's Plan for Jobs which included a £111 million investment to triple the number of traineeships available, the government is [planning a procurement opportunity](#) so providers can access funding to deliver 19 to 24 adult education budget (AEB) funded traineeships. A government announcement states:

As well as an investment of £111m for 2020 to 2021, there are new flexibilities and opportunities which will strengthen traineeships and widen access to them for young people:

- young people qualified up to Level 3 (rather than Level 2 previously) are now eligible for a traineeship
- there is a more flexible work experience offer of minimum 70 hours, with multiple employers if needed
- we want to see flexible content and qualifications that prepares trainees for progression to apprenticeships and jobs through a direct line of sight to the occupational standards
- an increased AEB traineeship learning aim cost of £1500.
- employers who offer new traineeship work placements will receive £1,000 per learner (up to ten learners) to support engagement and assist with costs such as the purchase of additional PPE for trainees
- traineeships can now last up to 12 months, allowing twice as much time on a programme for those young people with particular needs who need it. We still expect traineeships to support young people into work as quickly as possible.

[Figures](#) for the first two quarters of the 2019/20 academic year show that traineeship starts have decreased to 8,400 from 8,800 starts reported at the equivalent point in 2018/19, a fall of 3.8 per cent. Under 19s account for over four-fifths of traineeship starts (80.5 per cent – 6,800 starts).

In 2019, a [report](#) estimating the impact of traineeships from those beginning in the academic year 2013/14 found that 12 months after starting their traineeship, 29% began an apprenticeship and 57% starting further learning. For 19-23 year olds, the analysis indicated a positive impact of being employed 12 months after the traineeship.

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee is a European Union approach to tackling youth unemployment which ensures that all young people under the age of 25 – whether registered with employment services or not – get a good-quality, concrete offer within 4 months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. The UK supports the aims of the Youth Guarantee, but for subsidiarity and national specificity reasons prefers to continue with its existing approaches; see the article on ['Integration of Young People in the Labour Market'](#) for further details.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

Traineeships and apprenticeships are promoted to young people through all the usual channels, including social media, television and print adverts.

The Government provides the ['Find an Apprenticeship'](#) service to help young people find and apply for apprenticeships. There are also a number of national events which promote and celebrate apprenticeships:

- The [National Apprenticeship Awards](#) recognise excellence in businesses that grow their own talent through apprenticeships and the apprentices who have made a significant contribution to their workplaces.
- The annual [Apprenticeship Week](#) celebrates and promotes the impact of apprenticeships. National Apprenticeship Week [2021](#) will take place from 8 to 14 February 2021.

In addition to young people proactively searching for opportunities themselves, organisations which work with young people may refer them to traineeship programmes and apprenticeships. Such organisations include local authority services for young people, schools, colleges, Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches, National Careers Service advisers and National Citizen Service providers.

Making traineeships and apprenticeships attractive to employers

Special measures are available to promote traineeships and apprenticeships, making them more attractive to employers.

In September 2020 it was [announced](#) as part of the Government's Plan for Jobs response to COVID-19, employers are being offered £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire aged under 25, and £1,500 for each newly recruited apprentice aged 25 and over. This includes taking on an apprentice who has been made redundant. The cash boost is designed to support employers to cover the cost of recruiting an apprentice such as providing facilities, uniforms, helping with travel costs or to help pay their salary. This new cash incentive for employers is on top of the existing £1,000 payment for new 16-18 year-old apprentices, and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Incentives for employers to take on 16-18 year olds for quality apprenticeships [come in the form of](#) a £1,000 payment, paid to employers in instalments at 3 months and 12 months. Employers who benefit from the small employer co-investment waiver will also receive these payments. Additionally, employers who train an apprentice aged 19-24 and has previously been in care or who has a Local Authority Education, Health and Care plan, will receive £1,000 to help with these additional costs in the same way as the payment for 16-18 year olds. Employers with less than 50 employees are not required to co-invest 5% in their apprentice's training - the government will pay 100% of the training cost.

In addition, many of the Government City Deals (agreements between cities and the government, which give the former additional powers to support economic growth) encourage employers to hire apprentices through schemes such as devolved employer grants.

Further information is available in a [House of Commons Research Briefing](#) (House of Commons Library, 2016).

Note that the [Enterprise Act 2016](#) introduced apprenticeship employment targets for public sector bodies in England to meet.

Recognition of learning outcomes

The minimum standards for apprenticeships and traineeships are covered in the sub-section covering official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships.

Funding

Apprenticeships

The government covers a proportion of the cost of training apprentices. Following changes to the funding system at the end of 2016, the amount it contributes depends on whether or not the apprentice employer pays the apprenticeship levy (see below). Employers choose the training they would like their apprentice to receive throughout their apprenticeship. The apprenticeship funding system includes 30 funding bands, with the upper limit of those bands ranging from £1,500 to £27,000.

[From January 2020](#) employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy have been able to create accounts on the apprenticeship service and reserve funding to cover the costs of apprenticeship training and assessment. For the

remainder of the 2020-21, the number of ‘active’ or ‘used’ reservations available to non-levy paying employers at any given time will increase from 3 to 10. This enables non-levy paying employers to recruit more apprentices for their businesses through the apprenticeship service. This policy came into effect on 15 July 2020 and will continue to be kept under review.

Following the passing of the [Finance Act 2016](#), an Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017 for large employers (including public bodies) who have an annual pay bill of more than £3 million. The levy is set at a rate of 0.5 per cent of an employer’s gross wage bill. Each employer will receive a £15,000 allowance, meaning that only those whose total wage bills are more than £3 million pay the levy. Employers only pay the portion of the wage bill that is above the £3 million threshold.

Guidance related to how hiring an apprentice and apprenticeship funding for employers is available from the government [website](#).

A House of Commons [briefing paper](#) on Apprenticeship funding was published in October 2016.

Traineeships

Traineeships for 16- to 18-year-olds are funded by the [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#), an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education (DfE) using a funding per student methodology. For 19- to 24-year-olds, they are funded from the [Adult Education Budget](#). The funding available for 19-to 24-year-olds combines work experience and work preparation into a single funding rate. The primary measure of success is securing a positive outcome for participants in the form of an apprenticeship, sustainable employment or further learning (a condition of 20 percent of the funding a provider receives).

Training providers receive a 20 per cent achievement payment if the learner progresses to one of a number of successful outcomes beyond solely achieving a qualification.

As part of the Plan for Jobs response to the economic implications of COVID-19, the government will provide an [additional £111 million](#) this year for traineeships in England, to fund high quality work placements and training for 16-24 year olds. This funding is enough to triple participation in traineeships. The government will fund employers who provide trainees with work experience, at a rate of £1,000 per trainee. The government will improve provision and expand eligibility for traineeships to those with Level 3 qualifications and below, to ensure that more young people have access to high quality training.

Information on traineeship funding for 16-19 year olds in 2020-21 can be found [here](#).

Quality assurance

Arrangements for quality assurance look at both the quality of training and financial management and performance of providers.

Quality of training

[Ofsted](#), the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills, is the non-ministerial government department responsible for the inspection and regulation of day care and children’s social care, and the inspection of children’s services (including services for vulnerable children), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, youth work, work-based learning and adult education. The overall purpose of Ofsted inspections is to

evaluate how efficiently and effectively education and training provision meets learners' needs. Providers are notified of any areas where they need to improve and offered support to do so. Where provision is deemed inadequate, this triggers a process of intervention.

All inspection reports are published in order to inform decision-making by prospective learners who may be considering several different institutions. The inspection process also aims to promote improvement for all providers by setting expectations, increasing the accuracy of the provider's self-assessment, and identifying best practice.

Ofsted inspects training providers under the [Common Inspection Framework](#) and the [Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook](#).

When carrying out a full inspection, inspectors make graded judgements about the following areas, which enable them to make an overall judgement about the effectiveness of the setting:

- effectiveness of leadership and management
- quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- personal development, behaviour and welfare
- outcomes for children and learners.

Each of the four areas above and the overall effectiveness of the school are judged using criteria relating to the following grading scale:

- grade 1: outstanding
- grade 2: good
- grade 3: requires improvement
- grade 4: inadequate.

Inspectors also consider a provider's approach to safeguarding and how well staff promote learner welfare and keep them safe, as outlined in the Ofsted guidance document, [Inspecting Safeguarding in early years, education and skills settings from September 2019](#).

All inspection reports are made publicly available and are published on the [Ofsted website](#).

Financial health of providers

Another important element of quality assurance is the monitoring of the financial health, financial management and performance of providers, undertaken by the [Education and Skills Funding Agency](#). The SFA is also responsible for some direct intervention when it has concerns about financial health or control.