

EMPLOYER'S GUIDE
TO UNDERSTANDING
APPRENTICESHIPS
2026



INTRODUCTION

Apprenticeships are a valuable way to build a skilled and motivated workforce while providing individuals with the opportunity to gain qualifications and practical experience. Whether you're looking to bring in new talent or develop existing staff, apprenticeships can help future-proof your business.

This guide is designed to help employers understand how apprenticeships work, the benefits they offer, and how to access available funding and incentives. We cover everything from apprenticeship levels and costs to the time commitment involved, ensuring you have the information you need to make informed decisions.

At BPIF Training, we specialise in delivering high-quality apprenticeships tailored to the printing, packaging, and graphic communications industries. As the UK's largest provider of print apprenticeships, we are committed to supporting businesses every step of the way, from recruitment to completion.

We hope this guide helps you navigate the apprenticeship process with confidence. If you have any questions, our team is here to help.

VISION

Future proof the UK's printing, packaging and graphics communications workforce through high-quality solutions.

MISSION STATEMENT

To enable all employers and employees in the print, packaging, and graphic communication industries with access to high-quality, sector specific training and development opportunities, fostering growth, enhancing skills and driving innovation. To cultivate a skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of the industry, ensuring long-term success and sustainability for our partners and the communities we service.

VALUES

DYNAMIC

Proactively ready to embrace change

EMPATHETIC

Understand and share in the feelings of our learners and colleagues, fostering connection and compassion

ASPIRATIONAL

Striving to help our learners achieve a high level of success

ADVOCACY

Flying the flag to keep skills in our industry

PASSIONATE

Supporting and inspiring individual learner growth and success

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship is a structured training programme that combines work and study, enabling individuals to gain valuable skills while contributing to your business. Apprenticeships can be offered at various levels, from intermediate to degree-level, making them suitable for both new hires and existing staff looking to upskill. By investing in apprenticeships, you're not only filling skills gaps but also fostering loyalty and productivity within your workforce.

WHY BPIF TRAINING?

BPIF Training is the country's largest provider of print apprenticeships, offering industry-specific expertise. We received a Good Ofsted rating in August 2023, reflecting the high quality of our training and support. Additionally, we are rated as an Excellent provider by both learners and employers on the Find Apprenticeship Training service (overall reviews). Our team is committed to guiding you through the entire apprenticeship process, from recruitment to completion, ensuring your apprentices get the best possible start in their careers.

EMPLOYER REVIEWS



APPRENTICE REVIEWS



UNDERSTANDING APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships combine formal learning with practical experience in the workplace. They give people the chance to develop new skills while they contribute to your business. To help you choose the right apprenticeship, it's important to understand the different levels available, how the funding works, and the time commitment involved.

LEVELS OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are available at several levels, depending on the needs of your business and the role in question:

INTERMEDIATE (Level 2)

This is the equivalent of GCSEs and is suited to entry-level roles. These apprenticeships cover basic skills and knowledge needed for operational roles, such as administrative assistants or junior technical staff.

ADVANCED (Level 3)

Equivalent to A-levels, advanced apprenticeships provide deeper learning, preparing apprentices for technical or supervisory positions. These apprenticeships are suitable for roles like team leaders or skilled technicians.

HIGHER (Level 4 and 5):

Similar to a foundation degree, higher apprenticeships are designed for those taking on specialist or managerial roles. Employees in these programmes gain the skills needed for roles like departmental managers or technical experts.

DEGREE (Level 6 and 7):

These apprenticeships are equivalent to a bachelor's or master's degree. They are suited to senior or highly skilled positions, such as engineers, accountants, or senior managers. BPIF Training offers Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeships, aimed at developing management skills and strategic thinking in leadership roles.

INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIPS:

For businesses in printing and packaging, BPIF Training offers apprenticeships like the Print Technician standard. This programme equips apprentices with the skills needed to work in print production, ensuring they meet industry standards and regulations.

FUNDING AND COSTS

Apprenticeship funding is structured to support businesses of all sizes:

- **The Apprenticeship Levy:** If your business has a pay bill over £3 million per year, you will pay the Apprenticeship Levy. These funds are placed into a digital account, which you can use to cover the costs of apprenticeship training. Any unspent funds expire after 24 months.
- **Non-Levy Employers:** Smaller businesses that don't pay the levy can benefit from government co-investment. The government will cover 95% of the training costs, leaving the employer to contribute only 5%. This makes it affordable for businesses of all sizes to hire and train apprentices.
- **Government Incentives:** Employers can also access additional financial incentives. If you hire apprentices aged 16-18, or those from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., care leavers or individuals with an Education, Health and Care Plan), the government provides extra funding to support the apprenticeship. Employers may also receive bonus payments when apprentices successfully complete their training.
- **Levy transfer** - A levy transfer allows large employers with unspent Apprenticeship Levy funds to transfer up to 50% of their annual funds to other organisations, helping smaller businesses cover apprenticeship training costs. This initiative supports broader access to apprenticeships across industries and helps maximise the use of available funds.

Find out about our scheme here - <https://bpif.training/printing-possibilitiesthe-apprenticeship-levy-transfer-scheme/>

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

The government provides several financial incentives to support businesses in hiring and training apprentices, making apprenticeships accessible and affordable for organisations of all sizes.

£1,000 INCENTIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Employers receive a **£1,000 payment** when they hire apprentices aged 16-18, as well as apprentices aged 19-24 who have been in care or have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan. This payment is split into **two instalments**: the first after **three months** and the second after **twelve months** of the apprenticeship. This incentive helps support businesses in offering opportunities to younger or potentially disadvantaged apprentices.

FOR EMPLOYERS WHO DO NOT PAY THE LEVY

The government will fully fund apprenticeship training costs, up to the funding band maximum, for apprentices who at the start of their apprenticeship training are:

- ♦ Aged 16 to 21 years old (or 15 if their 16th birthday is between the last Friday of June and 31 August)
- ♦ Aged 22 to 24 years old with an education, health and care (EHC) plan provided by their local authority and/or have been in the care of their local authority

NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

Available for both upskilling existing staff and new hires, employers can be exempt from paying Class 1 National Insurance contributions for an apprentice if the learner:

- ♦ Is under 25 years old
- ♦ Earns less than £967 a week (£50,270 a year)

APPRENTICE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

As of 1 April 2025, the apprentice rate of the National Minimum Wage £8.00ph applies to:

- ♦ Apprentices under 19 years old
- ♦ Apprentices aged 19 or over in their first year of the apprenticeship

For apprentices who do not meet these criteria, the standard NMW rates for their age group apply.

TIME COMMITMENT

An apprenticeship requires a balance between work and formal learning. Apprentices must spend 6 hours per week on off-the-job training. This can include attending training sessions, online learning, or shadowing more experienced colleagues. The purpose is to give apprentices the theoretical knowledge they need to apply in the workplace.

APPRENTICESHIP SERVICES	LEVEL	COST (OVERALL)	TYPICAL DURATION (MONTHS)	5% COST NON-LEVY
Team Leader	3	£5,000	15	£225
Customer Service Practitioner	2	£3,500	18	£175
Customer Service Specialist	3	£4,000	18	£200
Business Administrator	3	£5,000	18	£250
Lean Manufacturing Operative	2	£6,000	18	£300
Print Technician	3	£14,000	30	£600
Print Operative	2	£8,000	24	£400
Operations Manager	5	£9,000	24	£350
Signage Technician	3	£10,000	24	£500
Supply Chain Practitioner	3	£15,000	20	£750

CONTACT US

To find out more about our Apprenticeships, please contact our team at training@bpif.org.uk or call us on 01676 526 060.

Find us on social media

