

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

EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

IDENTIFYING BUSINESS NEEDS & RECRUITMENT PROCESS



IDENTIFYING BUSINESS NEEDS

Recruiting an apprentice is a chance to address skills shortages, improve your workforce, and plan for the future. Understanding where your business needs support will help you make better decisions when choosing an apprenticeship programme.

SKILLS GAPS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Many businesses face challenges as new technologies or processes emerge. Apprenticeships can help meet these challenges by training people in the skills your business lacks. To find out where you need support, ask yourself:

ARE THERE
NEW TOOLS OR
PROCESSES THAT
YOUR STAFF
NEED TO LEARN?

WHAT SKILLS DO
YOUR CURRENT
EMPLOYEES LACK?

WHAT SKILLS
WILL YOUR
BUSINESS NEED
OVER THE NEXT
FEW YEARS?

APPRENTICESHIPS CAN FILL THESE GAPS BY PROVIDING TAILORED
TRAINING THAT MEETS YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS.

MATCHING APPRENTICESHIPS TO ROLES

It's important to match apprenticeships with the right roles in your business. BPIF Training offers a range of programmes that suit different positions:

- **Technical Roles:** For technical roles, like machine operators or technicians, the Print Technician apprenticeship provides the skills needed for the printing industry.
- **Management Roles:** If you want to develop managers or team leaders, higher-level apprenticeships like Operations/ Departmental Manager or Senior Leader are available.
- **Support Roles:** Apprenticeships in Business Administration or Customer Service can help improve support functions within your business.

Choosing the right apprenticeship will ensure that your staff develop in ways that directly support your operations.

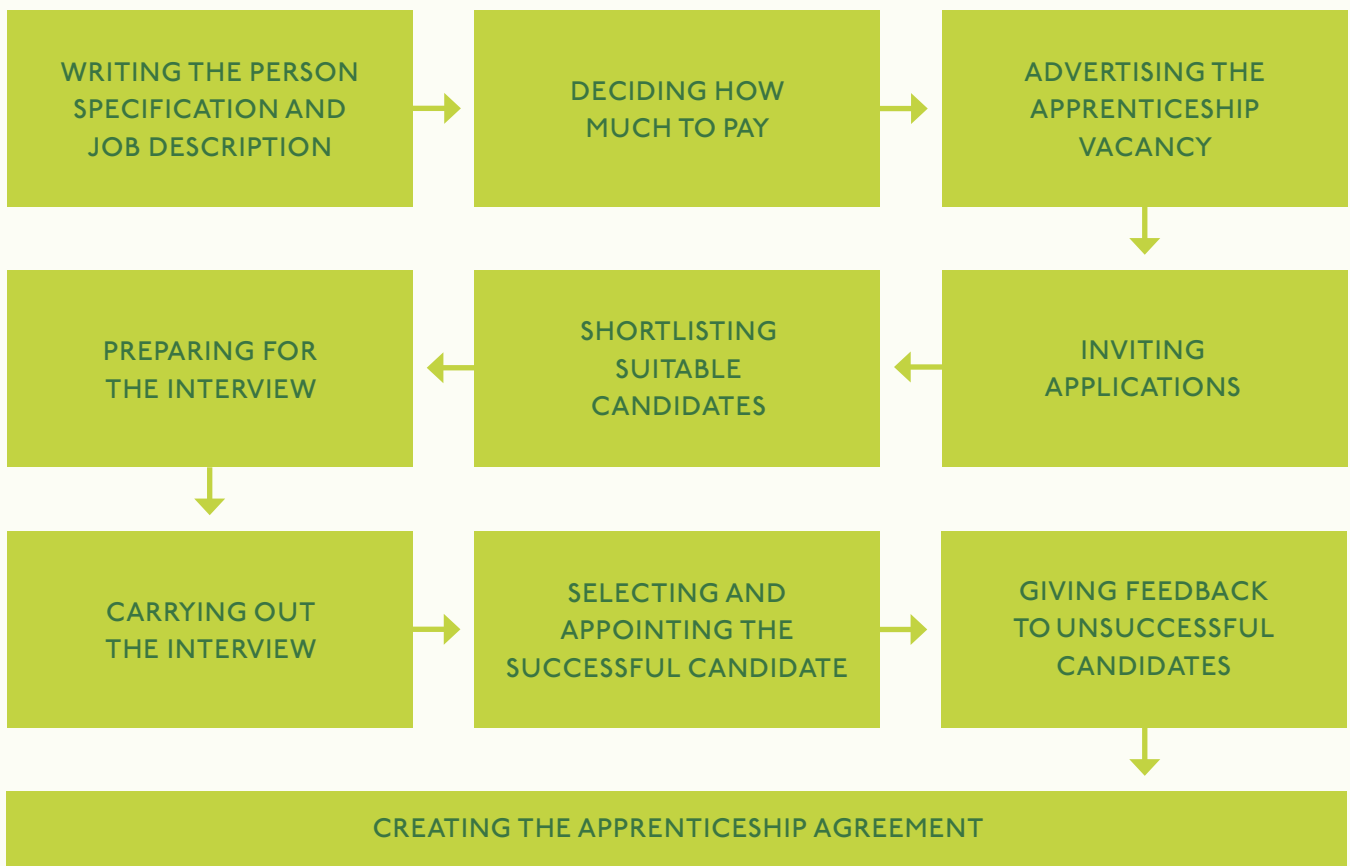
SUCCESSION PLANNING

Apprenticeships can also help with succession planning. By training staff, you create a pipeline of future leaders or specialists. This ensures your business has the skills it needs as it grows. Apprenticeships can help with:

- **Developing Internal Talent:** Apprenticeships allow you to train your own staff, rather than hiring from outside the company.
- **Preparing for the Future:** If you expect retirements or promotions, apprenticeships help you prepare replacements for key roles.
- **Building Resilience:** By training staff, you ensure your business can adapt to change and thrive.

Apprenticeships offer a way to prepare your workforce for the future while meeting current needs.

RECRUITMENT PROCESS



Recruiting the right apprentice involves a series of steps that ensure both you and the candidate are well-prepared for the role. It's important to approach this process thoughtfully, taking into account the job market, salary expectations, and the level of experience you can expect from your applicants.

CREATING THE JOB DESCRIPTION AND CANDIDATE PROFILE

The first step is to clearly define the role you are offering. A well-written job description helps attract the right candidates and ensures clarity about what the job entails. Include the main duties, the skills required, and any qualifications or experience you expect. For apprenticeships, it's often useful to emphasise the learning and development opportunities that come with the role.

GUIDE TO WRITING JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR APPRENTICESHIP VACANCIES

A well-written job description is a critical tool in attracting candidates and setting clear expectations.

1. JOB TITLE

Keep it Clear and Accurate: Use a straightforward, specific job title that reflects the role. The job title should convey the nature of the role at a glance.

2. SUMMARY OF THE ROLE

Provide a Brief Overview: Include a concise, 2-3 sentence overview of the position. Describe the primary purpose of the role.

3. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

List Core Duties: Provide a bullet-pointed list of the role's main tasks. Be specific about what the person will do day-to-day and note the position's role within the broader team.

4. REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS AND SKILLS

Differentiate Between Must-Haves and Nice-to-Haves. This helps candidates assess their fit for the role. Remember that apprentices often have little-to-no experience, and so focus on soft skills, such as willingness to learn and team-working.

5. LOCATION AND WORK ENVIRONMENT

Specify Location and Working Conditions. Include details about travel requirements, physical demands, or work schedule expectations, if relevant.

6. SALARY AND BENEFITS

Apprenticeship wage: Provide a clear indication of the wage (if the wage varies, explain how and when).

Benefits: Mention any additional perks such as travel allowances, equipment provided, or employee discounts.

7. PROGRESSION

Be sure to highlight attractive benefits and be clear about progression pathways within your organisation.

Apprenticeships are seen as a route to a career, and not just a job.

8. COMPANY OVERVIEW

Include a Brief Introduction to the Company: Add a short description of your company, its mission, and the values or culture that set it apart. This can make your job description stand out and attract candidates aligned with your values.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1

USE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Avoid language that may discourage certain groups from applying.

2

BE CLEAR BUT NOT OVERLY DETAILED

A concise, well-structured job description is more likely to attract interest than one packed with excessive details.

3

PREP

Be prepared to update and review regularly

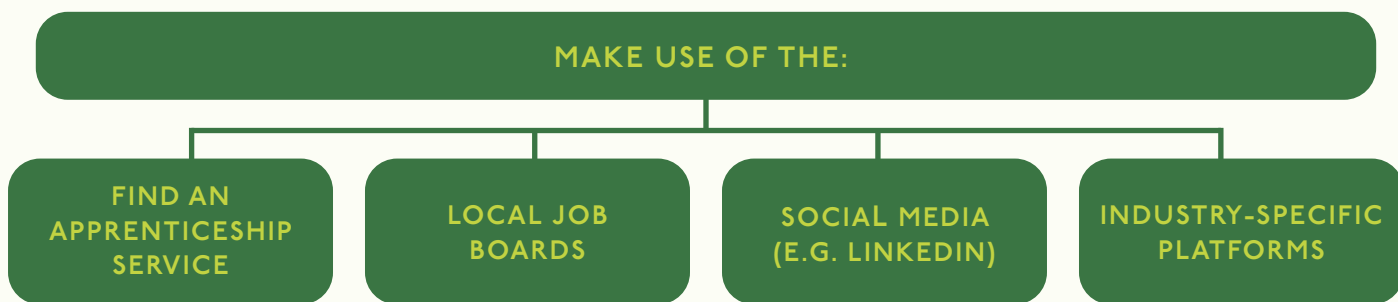
SETTING THE SALARY

When deciding how much to pay, it's important to consider the broader job market. Think about who you are competing with for talent in your local area. Are other employers offering apprenticeships, or are you competing with businesses offering entry-level jobs? If your salary isn't competitive, you may struggle to attract the best candidates. That said, remember that apprenticeship salaries can be lower than standard entry-level roles because apprentices benefit from formal training and career progression opportunities. You should also be mindful of the minimum wage requirements for apprentices, ensuring you comply with legal standards while remaining competitive.

<https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>

PROMOTING THE APPRENTICESHIP VACANCY

Once you've finalised the job description and salary, you'll need to promote the role.



BPIF Training can support you in advertising the vacancy to attract a strong pool of candidates.

REVIEWING AND SHORTLISTING APPLICATIONS

When applications start coming in, your next task is to screen and shortlist candidates. For apprenticeship roles, it's important to be flexible in your expectations, particularly if you are recruiting a young person at the start of their career. While they may not have a wealth of experience, look for signs of enthusiasm, commitment, and a willingness to learn. Skills can be developed through training, but the right attitude is key.

INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

Before interviewing, it's useful to prepare questions that will help you understand the candidate's motivation, interests, and potential. Keep in mind that apprentices, especially those new to the workforce, may be nervous or less polished than more experienced candidates. Focus on assessing their suitability for the role and their potential to grow into it.

OFFERING THE ROLE AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

When selecting your apprentice, it's important to manage expectations from the outset. If you're hiring a young person or someone new to the industry, they may need more guidance and support as they adjust to the working environment. Make sure you're clear about the level of responsibility they will take on and how their role will develop over time.



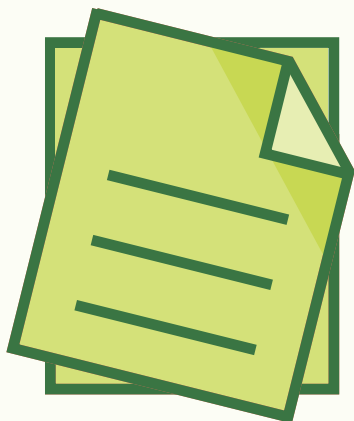
APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENT AND COMMITMENT STATEMENT

When hiring an apprentice, it's essential to have the right agreements in place. An **Apprenticeship Agreement** and a **Commitment Statement** are both legal requirements, ensuring all parties—employer, apprentice, and training provider—understand their responsibilities and expectations.



APPRENTICESHIP AGREEMENT

The Apprenticeship Agreement is a contract between the employer and the apprentice. It outlines the specific apprenticeship framework or standard, the role of the apprentice, and the length of the apprenticeship. This agreement confirms that the apprentice is an employee with the same rights as others, such as pay, holidays, and working hours. **BPIF Training can provide a template agreement to ensure you meet these legal requirements with ease.**



COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The Commitment Statement sets out the learning and development plan for the apprentice. It includes:

- The content and schedule of training
- The apprentice's responsibilities during the programme
- The support that the employer and training provider will offer
- How progress will be monitored and reviewed

BPIF Training will support both the employer and the apprentice in completing the Commitment Statement. This will be done as part of the **onboarding process** to ensure that all parties are clear on their roles from the very beginning.

For more detailed information on apprentice pay and conditions, employers can visit this useful resource: [Apprentice Pay and Conditions](#).

MORE INFORMATION

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



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING



EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS



MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS

An apprenticeship is an investment not only in the apprentice's growth but in the long-term success of your business. By planning for their future and providing opportunities for ongoing development, you can retain skilled talent and ensure your workforce remains strong.

RETAINING TALENT

Integrating apprentices into your long-term workforce plans can help you build a skilled and committed team. Strategies for retaining apprentices after they complete their programme include:

- **Offering Clear Career Paths:** Outline potential career progression within the company, showing apprentices how they can grow and advance over time.
- **Providing Mentorship and Guidance:** Continue mentorship beyond the apprenticeship, helping apprentices navigate their roles and encouraging further skill development.
- **Involving Apprentices in Team Initiatives:** Engage apprentices in broader projects and company goals. This increases their sense of belonging and makes them feel like valuable members of the team.
- **Recognising Achievements:** Celebrating milestones and successes boosts morale and shows apprentices that their contributions are valued.

By considering apprentices as long-term members of the team, employers can build loyalty and reduce turnover, creating a stable and skilled workforce.

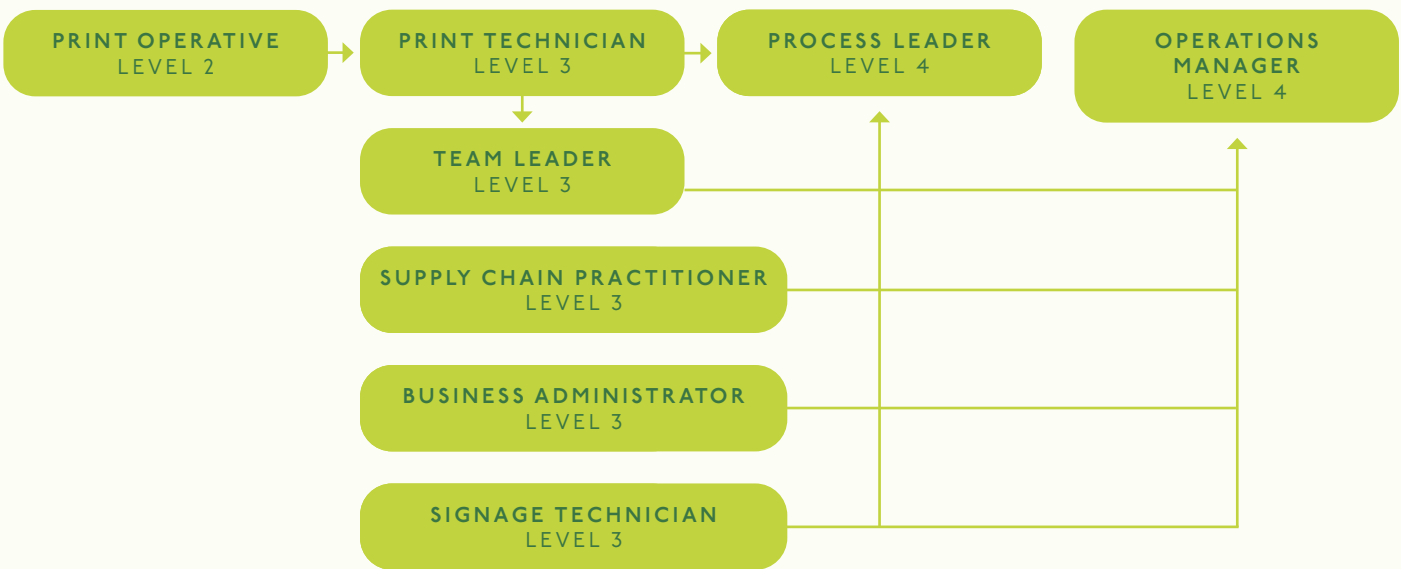
CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD)

After completing their apprenticeship, many apprentices are eager to continue growing. Supporting further learning and skill development can help keep them engaged and productive. Encourage continuous professional development through:

- **Higher-Level Apprenticeships:** Progressing to the next level of an apprenticeship, such as moving from an advanced to a higher or degree-level apprenticeship, is a great way for apprentices to deepen their expertise.
- **Specialised Training:** Offering industry-specific courses or certifications helps apprentices develop specialist skills aligned with your business needs.
- **Leadership Programmes:** For apprentices showing potential in management, consider providing training in leadership skills. This prepares them for future supervisory or management roles.
- **Regular Development Reviews:** Conducting reviews even after the apprenticeship ends ensures that ongoing learning goals are supported and adjusted as necessary.

By fostering a culture of continuous development, employers can retain skilled apprentices and empower them to contribute at a higher level, strengthening their commitment to the organisation.

PROGRESSION PATHWAYS





EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

**ONGOING SUPPORT, ASSESSMENTS &
MANAGING APPRENTICE PERFORMANCE**



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

ONGOING SUPPORT AND ASSESSMENT

Effective support and structured assessments help apprentices progress successfully. BPIF Training partners with both the apprentice and employer to monitor development and prepare for the final assessment.

OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

Apprentices will spend around **6 hours per week** on off-the-job (OTJ) training, which takes place during their regular working hours. This training doesn't necessarily mean time away from their usual tasks, as many learning activities happen naturally within their role. The key is to track and record these activities as part of the apprentice's development. Examples of OTJ training include:

- **Workshops and Webinars:** Formal sessions outside of regular duties where the apprentice builds new skills.
- **Learning New Skills on the Job:** For example, observing a colleague perform a task or learning a new process can count as OTJ.
- **Project Work:** Assigning a relevant project allows the apprentice to apply new skills in a structured way.
- **Online Learning:** Completing relevant online courses or modules that support their role.
- **Shadowing Experienced Staff:** Observing senior colleagues on complex tasks provides valuable insight and skills.

By documenting these activities, employers ensure they meet the OTJ requirement, integrating learning directly into the apprentice's role.

PROGRESS REVIEWS

BPIF Training conducts regular **progress reviews** throughout the apprenticeship. It is valuable for employers to attend these reviews alongside the apprentice, as these sessions are a key part of the apprenticeship process. Reviews provide the opportunity to:

CHECK IN WITH BOTH APPRENTICE AND EMPLOYER:

Allowing both parties to discuss progress, address any concerns, and celebrate achievements.

REVIEW TRAINING GOALS:

Monitoring milestones and making adjustments to the learning plan as needed.

PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK:

Offering the apprentice insights on strengths and areas for growth.

Employer involvement in these reviews strengthens the apprentice's support system and ensures alignment on their progress.

END-POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)

The End-Point Assessment (EPA) is the final stage of the apprenticeship, verifying the apprentice has gained the necessary skills and knowledge. The EPA typically includes:

- **Practical Assessments:** Demonstrating competencies in a real-world context.
- **Knowledge Tests:** Assessing the apprentice's understanding of the theoretical aspects of their training.
- **Interviews or Presentations:** Allowing the apprentice to discuss and demonstrate their skills.

BPIF Training provides structured support to prepare for the EPA, including:

- **Mock Assessments:** Offering practice opportunities to build confidence.
- **Detailed Guidance:** Ensuring the apprentice and employer understand all requirements and expectations.

MANAGING APPRENTICE PERFORMANCE

Managing an apprentice's performance is a continuous process that helps them understand their role, achieve learning goals, and contribute to the business. Here are key components to ensure effective performance management:

1

SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

2

REGULAR CHECK-INS AND ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

3

FORMAL PROGRESS REVIEWS

4

ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

5

ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

5

PREPARATION FOR THE END-POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)

SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

- **Define Objectives:** From the start, set clear, realistic, and achievable goals with the apprentice. These goals should align with both the apprenticeship standard and the business's broader objectives. Regularly review and adjust these objectives as needed.
- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:** Make sure the apprentice understands how their role supports the team and the organisation. Clear expectations help apprentices see the value of their work and stay motivated.

REGULAR CHECK-INS AND ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

- **Frequent Feedback:** Schedule regular one-to-one meetings, ideally weekly or bi-weekly in the early stages. Use these sessions to recognise achievements, address any concerns, and discuss progress towards objectives.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Offer both positive feedback to reinforce strengths and constructive feedback for improvement. These conversations encourage apprentices to reflect on their performance and identify areas to develop.

FORMAL PROGRESS REVIEWS

- **Interim Reviews:** Align formal progress reviews with the apprentice's training milestones. During these reviews, celebrate successes and identify areas needing further focus. Ensure the training provider is involved to align learning progress with on-the-job performance.
- **Annual Appraisal:** Conduct an annual review to evaluate the apprentice's overall contributions and development throughout the year. This is an opportunity to formally document performance, reflect on the past year, and set goals for continued growth.

ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

- **Open Communication:** If performance concerns arise, address them early through honest conversations. Explore any challenges the apprentice might be facing, and work together to find solutions.
- **Support from BPIF Training:** Involve us to explore additional support or adjustments to the apprentice's training plan. The training provider can offer resources and guidance to help manage underperformance.
- **Structured Improvement Plans:** If issues persist, consider a formal improvement plan outlining specific steps and support. Clearly communicate the expectations and timeline for improvement, and check in frequently to monitor progress.

ENCOURAGING ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

- **On-the-Job Learning Opportunities:** Allow apprentices to apply their skills by giving them meaningful responsibilities and new challenges that align with their training.
- **Encourage Initiative:** Support apprentices in taking ownership of their learning by encouraging them to ask questions, seek feedback, and contribute ideas. This fosters confidence and commitment.
- **Promote Professional Development:** In addition to their apprenticeship, encourage further development through networking opportunities, involvement in relevant projects, and exposure to other areas of the business.

PREPARATION FOR THE END-POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA)

As the apprenticeship nears completion, prepare the apprentice for the End-Point Assessment by:

REVIEWING REQUIREMENTS:

Ensure the apprentice understands the EPA process and what is required for success.

PRACTICAL ASSESSMENTS:

If applicable, provide mock assessments or practice opportunities, such as presentations or interviews, to build confidence.

CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENTS:

Upon completing the EPA, recognise the apprentice's success. This boosts morale and fosters a sense of accomplishment within the team.

Effective performance management provides a supportive framework for apprentices to develop their skills, fulfil their potential, and become productive team members. Regular feedback, clear expectations, and supportive interventions when needed ensure apprentices can thrive and grow in their roles.

MORE INFORMATION

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



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING





EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

ONBOARDING YOUR APPRENTICE



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

ONBOARDING YOUR APPRENTICE

A well-structured onboarding process is key to ensuring your apprentice settles into their new role and starts on the right foot. Providing the right support from day one will help them integrate into your team and ensure they understand their responsibilities and training plan.

INDUCTION

When welcoming your apprentice, it's important to provide them with a clear introduction to the workplace. A well-organised induction should cover:

- ♦ **Introduction to the Company:** Give your apprentice an overview of the business, its culture, and how their role fits within the organisation.
- ♦ **Role Expectations:** Clearly explain their responsibilities and what's expected of them during the apprenticeship.
- ♦ **Health and Safety:** Ensure they understand the workplace safety protocols and any industry-specific regulations.
- ♦ **Assigning a Mentor:** Assigning a mentor or buddy is highly recommended. This experienced team member will be a key point of contact for the apprentice, offering guidance and support as they navigate their new role.

A thorough induction will give the apprentice the confidence to begin contributing to the team while ensuring they feel supported in their development.

CREATING A TRAINING PLAN

A structured training plan is essential to help apprentices balance their work responsibilities with their learning goals. BPIF Training works closely with employers and apprentices to develop a training plan that integrates:

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

The apprentice will gain hands-on experience in their role, applying the skills they are learning in real time.

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Off-the-job learning, which must account for at least 20% of the apprentice's time, will include activities like workshops, online courses, or shadowing more experienced staff.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

The training plan will outline the key skills, knowledge, and behaviours the apprentice will develop throughout the programme.

BPIF Training provides ongoing support in crafting this plan, ensuring it is tailored to both the apprentice's needs and the employer's business goals.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Regular check-ins and reviews are essential to monitor the apprentice's progress and ensure they are developing as expected. BPIF Training will work with both the apprentice and the employer to conduct:

- ♦ **Progress Reviews:** Scheduled every 12 weeks, these reviews assess their progress against the course's Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, how well the apprentice is performing, identify any areas for improvement, and ensure they are meeting the required standards.
- ♦ **Feedback and Guidance:** Apprentices benefit from constructive feedback, helping them understand what they are doing well and where they can improve.
- ♦ **Adjustments to the Training Plan:** If necessary, the training plan can be adjusted based on the apprentice's progress or any changes in the business.

EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When interviewing potential apprentices, it's helpful to focus on questions that reveal their motivation, potential, and willingness to learn. For many apprentices, this may be their first formal job interview, so keeping questions open and approachable can encourage honest responses. Here are some key areas and example questions to consider:

1. MOTIVATION AND INTEREST



2. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- Can you tell me about a time when you had to learn something new? How did you approach it?
- How do you feel about balancing hands-on work with formal learning?
- What skills do you hope to improve or gain through this apprenticeship?

These questions are especially useful for assessing the candidate's attitude towards learning and how they adapt to new experiences.

3. PROBLEM SOLVING AND RESILIENCE

- Tell me about a time when you faced a challenge. How did you handle it?
- What would you do if you made a mistake at work?
- Describe a situation where you had to solve a problem. What steps did you take?

Apprentices may be new to handling workplace issues, so these questions help identify candidates who are proactive and resilient, even if their examples come from school, hobbies, or personal experiences.

4. TEAMWORK AND COMMUNICATION

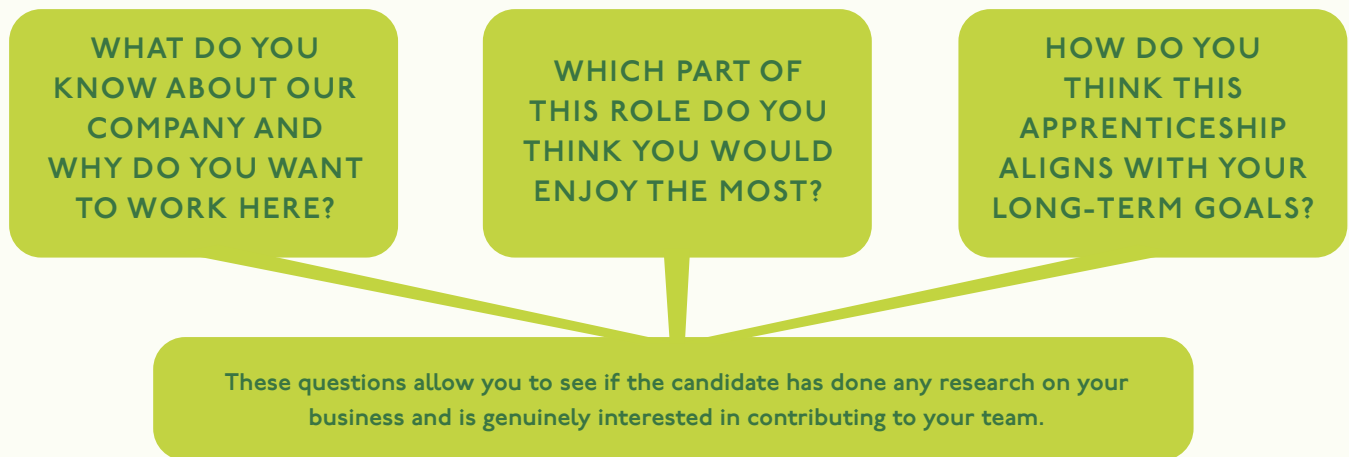


5. INITIATIVE AND INDEPENDENCE

- Tell me about a time when you showed initiative or did something on your own.
- How do you stay organised when you have multiple tasks to complete?
- If you're unsure how to complete a task, what would you do?

Apprentices are often learning as they go, so questions like these reveal how they handle independence and take responsibility for their learning.

6. INTEREST IN YOUR BUSINESS



MORE INFORMATION

To find out more about our Apprenticeships and how we can support our apprentices, please contact our team at training@bpiif.org.uk or call us on 01676 526 060.



WWW.BPIIF.TRAINING





EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

MENTAL HEALTH



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

APPRENTICE MENTAL HEALTH

Supporting apprentices' mental health is a key part of ensuring their well-being and success. Apprentices may face unique challenges, such as adapting to a new work environment or balancing learning with practical tasks, which can impact their mental health. As a manager, fostering a supportive, open environment can make a meaningful difference.

IDENTIFYING MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

Apprentices, especially those new to the workplace, may experience stress or anxiety as they adjust to their roles. Signs of potential mental health struggles can include:

WITHDRAWAL
FROM TEAM
ACTIVITIES

REDUCED
PRODUCTIVITY
OR FOCUS

CHANGES IN
BEHAVIOUR OR
MOOD

INCREASED
ABSENTEEISM



Keeping communication open and observing any changes in an apprentice's demeanour can help identify when additional support might be needed.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Encourage a workplace culture that prioritises mental health by:

1

NORMALISING CONVERSATIONS:

Foster an environment where apprentices feel comfortable discussing mental health concerns. Show that talking about mental health is part of a healthy workplace.

2

OPEN DOOR POLICY:

Make it clear that apprentices can reach out at any time. Regular check-ins allow you to address any emerging concerns early.

3

PROMOTING PEER SUPPORT:

Encourage apprentices to connect with others, either through buddy systems or networking with other apprentices, to create a sense of community.

PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Employers can support apprentices by connecting them with resources for mental health:

- **Internal Support:** Make apprentices aware of any Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP) available. This can include counselling or mental health support available through the company.
- **External Resources:** Offer information about external resources, such as:
 - NHS Every Mind Matters: Provides mental health advice and self-help tips.
 - Mind: A charity offering guidance, support, and access to mental health services.
 - Samaritans: Offers 24/7 support for individuals facing mental health challenges.



Additionally, apprentices with specific needs may qualify for the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service, which is funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. This programme offers free support, such as emotional wellbeing guidance and workplace adjustment recommendations.

▶▶▶▶ <https://atw.maximusuk.co.uk/>

SUPPORTING APPRENTICES THROUGH CHALLENGES

If an apprentice is experiencing a mental health condition that impacts their performance, consider adjustments such as:

- **Flexible Work Arrangements:** Adjust work hours or responsibilities to ease stress, particularly during times of high mental health impact.
- **Additional Breaks:** Provide flexibility for short breaks to manage stress during the workday.
- **Gradual Workload Increase:** Allow apprentices to slowly build up their responsibilities rather than feeling overwhelmed immediately.

TRAINING AND RESOURCES FOR MANAGERS

Managers play a crucial role in supporting apprentice mental health. Training can help managers recognise signs of mental health issues and respond effectively. Courses such as Mental Health First Aid or management workshops on mental well-being can improve understanding and provide tools for supporting apprentices effectively.

MORE INFORMATION

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



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING





EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026 **FAQ'S**



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

FAQS



1. WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship is a genuine job paired with a structured programme to develop skills, knowledge, and behaviours. Apprentices earn while they learn, completing a mix of practical experience and off-the-job training relevant to their role.

2. HOW DOES OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING WORK?

Apprentices will spend around 6 hours per week of their time on off-the-job training, but this doesn't mean leaving their daily responsibilities. This training can happen within the workplace through structured learning activities like workshops, shadowing, or project work that develop skills outside of their normal tasks.

3. WHO CAN APPLY FOR AN APPRENTICESHIP?

Apprenticeships are open to individuals over 16 who spend at least 50% of their working hours in England and aren't in full-time education. Employers can offer apprenticeships to new hires or use them to upskill existing employees.

4. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HIRING APPRENTICES?

Apprenticeships are a cost-effective way to develop a skilled workforce. Employers report increased productivity, improved quality, higher employee satisfaction, and lower staff turnover. By investing in apprenticeships, businesses strengthen their talent pipeline and support long-term growth.

5. WHAT ARE THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

Employers must provide a genuine job, pay apprentices a wage in line with minimum wage requirements, and support their development. Employers need to have an Apprenticeship Agreement and a Commitment Statement in place with their apprentice and maintain regular progress tracking.

6. HOW IS THE APPRENTICESHIP FUNDED?

Large employers pay the Apprenticeship Levy, which funds training and assessment costs. Non-levy employers contribute 5% of training and assessments costs, with the government covering the rest. Small employers may be eligible for additional funding, such as waivers on National Insurance for apprentices under 25.

7. CAN APPRENTICESHIPS BE USED TO DEVELOP CURRENT EMPLOYEES?

Yes, apprenticeships are suitable for both new hires and existing staff who need new skills for their role. Apprenticeships can also be tailored for higher skill levels, supporting career progression through advanced training.

FAQS



8. HOW DOES THE END-POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA) WORK?

The EPA is the final stage of the apprenticeship, assessing whether the apprentice has gained the required skills and knowledge. It can include practical assessments, knowledge tests, and interviews or presentations. BPIF Training provides support to prepare apprentices thoroughly for the EPA.

9. WHAT SUPPORT DOES BPIF TRAINING PROVIDE THROUGHOUT THE APPRENTICESHIP?

BPIF Training assists employers and apprentices with recruitment, creating training plans, monitoring progress, and preparing for the EPA. Regular check-ins and structured reviews ensure the apprentice stays on track.

10. WHAT HAPPENS IF AN APPRENTICE DOESN'T COMPLETE THEIR PROGRAMME?

If an apprentice leaves the programme, BPIF Training can help evaluate next steps, whether that means adjusting the training plan or discussing the option of recruiting a new candidate. We will help to ensure all efforts are made to retain staff.

11. WHAT IS THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY, AND WHO PAYS IT?

The Apprenticeship Levy is a fund paid by employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million. This levy supports apprenticeship training across the UK. Employers who pay the levy can access funds to cover training costs through their digital account.

12. CAN NON-LEVY EMPLOYERS RECEIVE SUPPORT FOR APPRENTICESHIPS?

Yes, non-levy employers (with a pay bill under £3 million) contribute only 5% of the training costs, with the government covering the remaining 95%. Small employers may also qualify for extra support, such as incentive payments when hiring younger apprentices.

13. ARE APPRENTICESHIPS AVAILABLE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

Apprenticeships are available from Level 2 (GCSE equivalent) up to Level 7 (Master's degree equivalent). This range allows apprentices to progress from foundational roles to highly specialised or managerial positions.

14. WHAT SUPPORT DOES AN APPRENTICE NEED FROM THEIR EMPLOYER?

Employers should provide a clear induction, assign a mentor, and conduct regular check-ins. Supporting apprentices in their learning activities and creating an inclusive workplace environment are essential to their success.

FAQS



15. DO APPRENTICES HAVE TO ATTEND TRAINING SESSIONS OFF SITE?

Not necessarily. Off-the-job training can happen in various ways, including on-site workshops, online courses, or shadowing experienced colleagues. It doesn't have to involve off site attendance and can be flexible based on the employer's needs and the apprenticeship standard. Typically we deliver via a hybrid delivery model – a mixture of site visits and online sessions.

17. HOW SHOULD OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING BE TRACKED?

Employers and training providers must track and record off-the-job training activities to ensure they meet the requirement. This can include online logs, feedback forms, or regular reviews with BPIF Training. We provide apprentices access to our online e-learning platform where this is recorded.

18. ARE THERE ANY FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR HIRING YOUNGER APPRENTICES?

Yes, employers receive a £1,000 payment when hiring apprentices aged 16-18 or apprentices aged 19-24 who were previously in care or have an education, health, and care plan. Additional support may be available to employers with fewer than 50 employees.

19. HOW CAN I ADVERTISE AN APPRENTICESHIP VACANCY?

Employers can advertise apprenticeship roles on their website, through local job boards, and by using the government's Find an Apprenticeship service. BPIF Training can support you in promoting your vacancy to reach a suitable pool of candidates.

MORE INFORMATION

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



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

BPIF
TRAINING

EMPLOYERS GUIDE 2026

ENGLISH & MATHS REQUIREMENTS



ENGLISH & MATHS REQUIREMENTS

Apprentices are required to meet certain English and Maths standards, which vary depending on their age at the start of the programme and the level of their apprenticeship. Employers play a key role in supporting apprentices to achieve the minimum requirements and ensuring compliance. The following outlines when English and Maths qualifications are mandatory, optional, and how Functional Skills are delivered alongside the apprenticeship.

The table below shows the key grade equivalents for English and Maths qualifications, which are used to determine an apprentice's eligibility and requirements.

Current	Old	
9		If the learner has already achieved GCSE English and Maths at grade 4/C or above, or Functional Skills Level 2, then no additional English or Maths is required as part of their apprenticeship.
8	A*	
7	A	
6	B	If the learner has not achieved these qualifications, the requirements depend on their age at the start of the apprenticeship.
5		
4	C	
3	D	AGES 16-18 AT START For apprentices aged 16-18, English and Maths requirements are mandatory if they do not already hold GCSE grade 4/C or Functional Skills Level 2. Apprentices must achieve at least the minimum level required for their apprenticeship standard
2	E	
1	F	
	G	
U	U	

For Level 2 apprenticeships:

The minimum requirement is Functional Skills Level 1 (or equivalent) to enter Gateway. Apprentices who do not hold suitable Level 1 qualifications in maths and English at enrolment will be required to study towards and achieve Level 1 Functional Skills. Once Level 1 is secured, apprentices must work towards Level 2 Functional Skills where it is determined there is time to make meaningful progress towards these qualifications. If they already hold Level 1 prior to enrolment, they must study towards and attempt the Level 2 Functional Skills exams, but do not need to pass Level 2 to progress to Gateway.

For Level 3+ apprenticeships:

The minimum requirement is Functional Skills Level 2 (or equivalent), which must be achieved before progressing to Gateway.

Ages 19+ at Start (New rules from Feb 2025)

For apprentices aged 19 or over at the start of the programme, English and Maths are no longer automatically required if they do not already hold GCSE grade 4/C or Functional Skills Level 2. Instead:

- Standalone English and Maths Functional Skills qualifications are optional.
- The decision to opt in must be agreed between the learner, employer, and training provider, and documented in the training plan.
- If a 19+ apprentice chooses to opt in, they will be enrolled on Functional Skills English and/or Maths and must study towards and attempt exams during their apprenticeship, but are not required to pass in order to enter gateway.

HOW FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ARE DELIVERED

Any apprentice enrolled on Functional Skills will study these alongside their main apprenticeship, in addition to their normal off-the-job (OTJ) hours.

Their Apprenticeship Tutor will support their development toward exam readiness, using BKSb to identify areas for improvement and check-point mock exams to measure progress and exam readiness.

The aim is for all Functional Skills to be completed within the first 12 months of the programme.

EMBEDDED AND CONTEXTUALISED MATHS AND ENGLISH DEVELOPMENT

Regardless of an apprentice's age at the start of programme, prior attainment or enrolment on standalone maths and English Functional Skills qualifications, all apprentices will develop vocational maths and English skills throughout their apprenticeship.

Our curriculums are designed to embed maths and English development through contextualised activities linking to the knowledge and skills criteria of the apprenticeship standard. All apprentices will benefit from vocational skills development in maths and English.

MORE INFORMATION

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



WWW.BPIF.TRAINING

