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HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SKILLS



**Employer guide to
apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are an excellent solution for supporting your talent management strategy. They offer a unique opportunity to attract, develop and retain top talent.

By investing in apprenticeships, you can build a highly trained workforce that is equipped with the latest skills and knowledge, ensuring the long-term success of your business.

With rising competition in the labour market, offering apprenticeship programmes can be a powerful draw for potential candidates who are seeking opportunities for professional growth and development. This can help you stand out as an employer of choice, ultimately leading to increased employee loyalty and lower turnover rates.

This short guide will take you through what you need to know to offer apprenticeships in your business and maximise their value and impact, along with useful tips to help you on the journey.

Business benefits of apprenticeships



Develop skilled and committed staff



Cost effective training and development



Increase staff retention



Improve productivity



Deliver returns to your bottom line



In this guide

- What are apprenticeships?
- Who are apprenticeships for?
- Types of apprenticeships
- Employing an apprentice
- Funding for apprenticeships
- Roles and responsibilities in an apprenticeship
- Step by step guide to getting started with apprenticeships

What are apprenticeships?

- An apprenticeship is a structured work-based training programme that combines practical on-the-job learning with formal off the job training.
- The **knowledge, skills and behaviours that apprentices must achieve to prove they are fully competent to do their job are defined by employers and are therefore totally relevant to the workplace.**
- During an apprenticeship, apprentices work alongside experienced colleagues to gain hands-on experience and develop practical skills. They also attend off-the-job training sessions to learn the theoretical aspects of their role and industry.
- At the end of an apprenticeship, apprentices receive a nationally recognised qualification, which demonstrates that they have gained the knowledge, behaviours and skills required to perform their job effectively.

What are apprenticeships for?

- Apprenticeships are **open to new employees or existing employees taking on a new role** that requires substantial training and development.
- The apprentice **must be employed** or be about to take up paid employment in an NI based company and be working a minimum of 21 hours per week on a permanent contract.
- **Apprenticeships can be used to upskill and retrain employees of any age**, not only those first entering the industry. There are apprenticeships suitable for all ages and career stages, from **skilled craft up to degree-level managers and leaders**. This includes older workers or existing staff as long as the apprenticeship is giving them new skills in order to achieve competence in their chosen role.
- The apprentice must meet the entry requirements of their chosen qualification and be over the age of 16, not in full time education and eligible to work in Northern Ireland.



Types of apprenticeships

There are two types of apprenticeship programmes:

- Apprenticeships NI - Level 2 and 3 apprenticeships
- Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) - Level 4 to Level 7 (available to individuals 18 and over)

Programmes are available in areas including:

Hospitality | Catering & Professional Chefs | Cultural Heritage | Cultural venue operations | Customer Service | Active Leisure & Wellbeing | Spa Therapy | Bus and Coach | Sales and Marketing | Business Administration | Customer Service | Accounting | Creative and digital media | Cyber security | Team Leading and Management

Check for available apprenticeships here:

[Level 2](#) | [Level 3](#) | [Higher level apprenticeships](#)



Apprenticeship levels

- **Level 2**
Considered to be equivalent to 5 GCSEs grade A-C. In most cases they will take 12 months to complete.
- **Level 3**
Considered to be equivalent to 2 A-Levels and will usually take 18 months to complete.
- **Levels 4 and 5**
This is equivalent to a foundation degree and will usually take 18-36 months to complete.
- **Levels 6 and above**
Equivalent to a Bachelor or Masters degree

Employing an apprentice

Employing an apprentice is like recruiting any other employee. They are in paid employment from day one and National Minimum Wage rates apply.

During an apprenticeship employers share their industry expertise and knowledge by providing mentoring and ‘on the job’ training. The apprentice participates in ‘off the job’ training (usually one day per week) to achieve the relevant industry qualifications and requirements which will be delivered by your chosen training provider.

Why employ an apprentice?



They're motivated: Research shows that apprentices are motivated to learn new skills. Plus, as they'll be spending 80% of their time learning through actively working in the business, you can train apprentices to behave, act and think in the interests of your business from day one.



They're loyal: The majority of apprentices stay on in their place of work after completion of their apprenticeship, meaning you secure and retain skilled talent that have been trained to an industry standard, tailored to your business needs and goals.



They help boost productivity: Proven to have a positive impact on productivity, apprentices bring energy, a fresh perspective and new ideas. The training they undertake helps them to become competent and proficient in their roles, and they help free up time for more senior staff to focus on key areas of their work, while the apprentice takes care of everyday tasks to work towards their skills competencies.

Funding for apprenticeships

As an employer, you can get funding from the government to help pay for apprenticeship training, making apprentices a cost-effective way of building your team. The funding pays for the 'off-the-job' element of the training. Employees are responsible for paying the apprentice as a permanent paid employee (to work at least 21hrs per week) including for the days they undertake off the job training.

- **For ApprenticeshipsNI (Level 2 and 3):** The full cost of the off-the-job training is fully funded. An incentive payment , which ranges from £558 to £1674, is also available for employers when an apprentice successfully completes all targeted qualifications within the full framework, and they have completed 104 weeks of employment.
- **Higher Level Apprenticeship Programme (Level 4 to Level 7):** Funding is provided by DfE to pay training provider costs for the off-the-job training.



Roles & responsibilities in an apprenticeship

Apprentice

- As employees, apprentices are subject to their employer's standard terms and conditions of employment
- Comply with company policies & procedures
- Adhere to health & safety regulations
- Follow the instruction and direction provided by your mentor
- Raise any issues or concerns with line management



Training Provider

- Design and deliver a course to meet the qualification framework
- Adopt a flexible approach by taking account of the apprentice's individual needs and experience
- Liaise with the employer on the content and practical activities in the apprentice's individual learning plan
- Provide apprentices with access to the same facilities as any other student
- Undertake apprentice assessments in conjunction with their employer



Employers

- Select candidates by a fair & equitable process, based on their attributes and training potential.
- Establish a structured but flexible apprenticeship within a supportive environment
- Provide apprentices with suitable opportunities to support their learning and skills acquisition
- Assign a mentor who is readily accessible to the apprentice
- Communicate regularly with the training provider to ensure the course content and practical activities assist the apprentice to achieve their learning objectives
- Pay the apprentice as a permanent paid employee at least the National Minimum Wage (to work at least 21hrs per week) including for the days they undertake off the job training.
- Support off the job learning by giving the apprentice time to attend training and enhance professional and technical knowledge



The roles will be set out in an Apprenticeship Agreement -
a commitment statement signed by the training provider, the apprentice and the employer.

Step by step guide to getting started with apprenticeships

1

Choose the apprenticeship framework

Knowing which apprenticeship programme/s are right for your business is an important starting point. This is the ideal time to take a fresh look at your overall talent management strategy and the job roles within the organisation to decide how apprenticeships can best support your business. Apprenticeships should be integrated into your workforce planning and aligned with business need, skills gaps and shortages and growth strategies.

You can find available apprenticeship frameworks for the full breadth of occupations here:

[Level 2](#)

[Level 3](#)

[Higher Level Apprenticeships](#)

2

Choose a training provider

Training providers are a key resource to employers, supplying the 'off the job' learning and development solutions for the apprenticeship. For each apprentice there will be one 'main provider', which takes on the responsibility for the entire programme and must deliver some of the apprenticeship training and assessment. Consider the training providers available to deliver your chosen framework/qualification in your local area. Do due diligence when choosing a training provider as it is critical in ensuring 'off the job' training meets your organisation's needs while being both job-specific and transferable. Factors to consider include: range of apprenticeships offered, experience, support offered and flexibility.

Search for approved training contractors for [Level 2 and Level 3 Apprenticeship frameworks](#), and/or for [Higher Level Apprenticeship training providers](#).

3

Advertise the apprenticeship opportunity

You may have a potential apprentice in your current workforce, for example an employee taking on a new role. If not, you can advertise your apprenticeship opportunity for free on www.jobapplyni.com where vacancies are advertised throughout Northern Ireland and globally. Additional employer support can be found here and your chosen training provider may also be able to help.

You can reach out to young people proactively through employment fairs, social media and online platforms.



Recruit an apprentice

The process for employing an apprentice is like recruiting any other employee.

Before employing an apprentice, in conjunction with your training provider you should be satisfied that the individual is suitable to undertake an apprenticeship and that the qualification is the appropriate choice for them.



Agree a training plan

Employers should work with the chosen training provider to design the learning and development journey and agree a training plan. It is important to note that all apprentices must complete the entire breadth of the apprenticeship framework. In some cases, the apprenticeship has a 'core' and 'options' section, which allow the apprentice and employer to select the appropriate specialism.

The apprenticeship may contain a small amount of skills or knowledge that are not used in the business, which the employer and provider will identify. However, it is important that the apprentice is competent in those areas - this should be achieved through off-the-job training. This ensures that all apprentices, regardless of where or how they undertake their apprenticeship, will be trained to the same standard and will have industry-relevant, transferrable skills.

Providing a mentor/buddy to support the apprentice is recommended. Mentor Connect is a free resource providing an opportunity for employers to develop the skills needed to support an apprentice in the workplace.



Review Progress

The next step to a successful apprenticeship is reviewing and assessing the apprentice during their learning journey with set milestones. The way in which this process is managed between the employer and provider is flexible; the important thing is that it's done regularly and consistently and covers the full breadth of the apprenticeship programme.

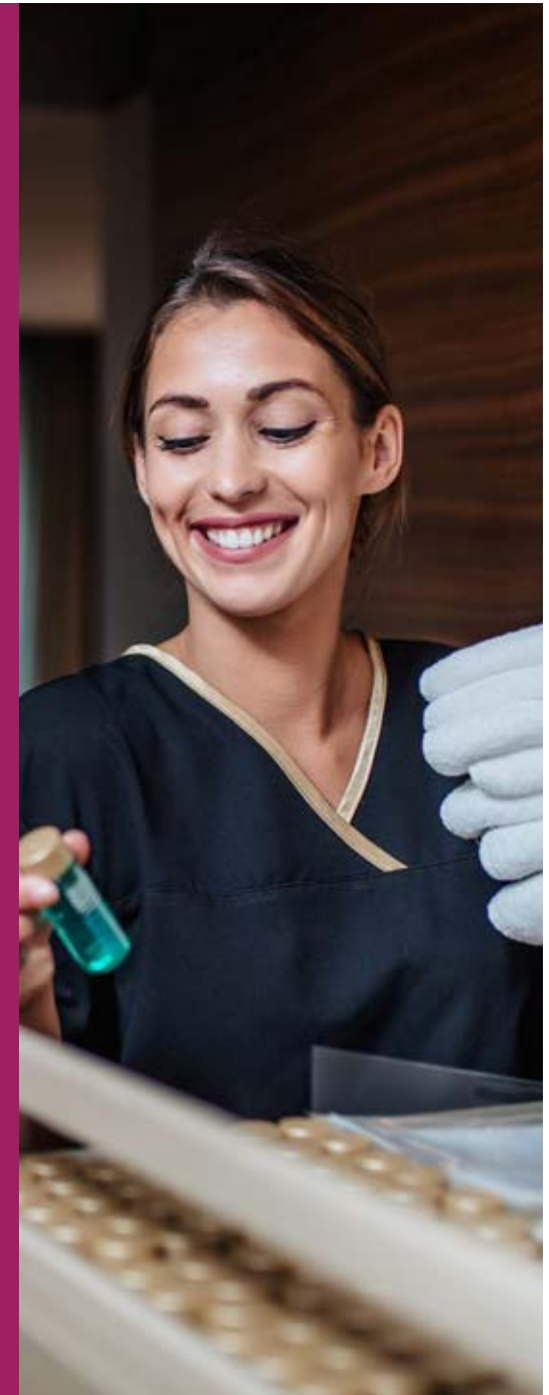


Good practice – Tips for success

Recruitment



- **Link apprenticeships into your recruitment and retention strategies:** Apprenticeships are a fantastic route to attract, develop and retain a diverse workforce and should form an important part of your overall strategy. Ensuring senior leadership commitment to champion apprenticeships helps to maximise their potential impact to the business.
- **Maximise all-age apprenticeships:** Make use of the extension to the age criteria for funding apprenticeships to develop the skills of your existing workforce who are over the age of 25 to support their development, career progression and retention.
- **Pay apprentices a fair wage:** Supporting apprentices with a fair wage provides businesses with substantial benefits including helping to attract the best talent and ensuring talent stays longer and feels valued. Ultimately this provides savings in the long term as productivity rises and hiring costs go down.
- **Maximise local partnerships:** To help find an apprentice consider holding open days, arrange visits to local schools, participate in careers fairs and use social media. You can also reach out to your local job centre and labour market partnership who can support access to a pool of people who are looking for work.
- **Consider the importance of career influencers:** When targeting young people, include a focus on parents to sell the career prospects of an apprenticeship and get their buy-in.
- **Adjust your recruitment practices to the skill and experience level of the candidate:** Consider a skill-based/ strength-based rather than competency-based interview approach.
- **Become an 'employer of choice':** Sign up to the Wellbeing & Development Promise to promote your commitment to developing talent.



Effective management and support

- **Invest time in managing apprentices:** Provide practical support and guidance, including induction, mentoring, regular review meetings and wellbeing support, to support apprentices.
- **Reward and recognise:** Ensure that the apprentice feels that their contribution is valued through reasonable autonomy, task variety and celebrating their achievements, as well as through formal and informal reward and recognition, such as incremental pay increases, vouchers and simply saying 'thank you'.
- **Provide support for managers:** Provide training and support to your line managers that manage young apprentices. Their role is pivotal to an apprentice's success.





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