

EMPLOYER TOOLKIT – RECRUITING AN APPRENTICE

As an existing employer you may already have current HR processes which will cover all or part of the apprenticeship recruitment process. The steps outlined below are a suggested route to help – click on the links to view example documents and templates.

1. Confirm apprenticeship role & salary

- A. Decide on the role of the apprentice and what skills will be required to carry this out.
- B. Select appropriate training framework and level.
- C. Confirm who will have line management responsibility of the apprentice.
- D. Decide on how much you wish to pay.

- *It may be helpful to involve an apprentice training provider in developing the role, as they can advise which framework will suit the role you have in mind.*
- *Ensure salary meets the current Apprentice National Minimum Wage <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates> (tends to increase each October).*
- *To decide on salary, research pay rates offered by competitors for similar apprenticeship roles, bearing in mind cost of living locally.*
- *Pay a salary that reflects your expectations of the level of work to be performed.*
- *Bear in mind the trainee nature of the role and consider increasing pay accordingly as skills develop.*

2. Source training provider

- A. Identify providers who deliver the framework required.
- B. Select suitable training provider.
- C. Confirm length of training (will dictate length of contract offered to apprentice).
- D. Confirm where training takes place (sometimes can be on employer's site), and whether there are fixed start dates or if it is "roll-on roll-off" delivery.
- E. Establish a service level agreement with provider which outlines responsibilities and deliverables on both sides. The provider may initiate this.

The line manager should act as a point of contact for the training provider, to set up relationship with the apprentice, and monitor on-going training delivery.

- *Use the Education & Skills Funding Agency search to find suitable training providers <https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk/Apprenticeship/Search>*
- *If your organisation has a wage bill <£3M, you will be eligible to pay the Apprenticeship Levy. For details see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>*
- *When selecting your provider, you can get an indication of quality via looking at Ofsted grades for apprenticeship provision and success rates for completion.*
- *Ensure your selected training provider understands your business and can teach the relevant units in the framework.*
- *There are usually optional modules within each apprenticeship, so discuss whether you can tailor the course content to suit your business needs.*
- *Depending on the age of your apprentice, you may need to contribute to the training costs. Different providers may charge different amounts for the same framework.*

3. Prepare job description & person specification

- A. Prepare job description. Include a job title, the main duties and purpose of the role, information about the company and the job location.
- B. Prepare selection criteria. Include essential and desirable knowledge, qualifications, previous experience and specific skills you're looking for.

- Your training provider can advise about minimum qualification levels required for the apprenticeship.
- Remember you can accept "equivalent" qualification levels, if candidates do not have GCSEs.
- Please see [Appendix 1](#) for example job descriptions and person specifications for various roles and levels of apprenticeships.
- Remember to pitch duties and responsibilities at entry level.
- It is unrealistic to assume that candidates will have previous paid experience in a similar role.

4. Prepare advert and advertise apprenticeship

- A. Describe the job using language that a young person would understand.
- B. Be clear on your requirements to maximise chances of receiving good quality applications.
- C. Consider using social media to reach the younger audience.
- D. Investigate using local networks of professionals supporting young people's career choices.
- E. Include information about where the training will take place, if apprentices are required to travel further afield (which can be challenging if the candidate has limited access to transport).
- F. If your organisation normally requires candidates to complete an application form, consider simplifying the form if possible, or offering some guidance on how to complete it.

- If your organisation has not got an existing presence on social media (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) you can advertise your role via Oxfordshire Apprenticeships social media sites.
- Remember that parents are often looking for roles for their children, so advertise through your normal channels too.
- Your training provider can ensure the vacancy is advertised on National apprenticeship website – <http://apprenticeships.org.uk>. This is the official job site for Apprenticeships in England and it is free to advertise.
- You may also want to consider local press, posters in community venues or Jobcentre Plus.
- Opportunities can also be advertised for free on Oxfordshire's Oxcentric website, which is aimed at young people and their advisors <http://oxme.info>.
- Building relationships with the careers lead at local schools can be an effective way of reaching young people who are approaching the end of their GCSEs or A Levels.
- Develop a relationship with prospective candidates via careers talks, school visits and offering work experience.

5. Shortlist and prepare for interview

- A. Use the selection criteria to shortlist applicants.
 - B. Ideally shortlisting should be done by more than one person to help avoid possible bias.
 - C. Notify candidates who will not be invited for interview and offer feedback as to why.
 - D. Provide as much information to the interviewee in advance e.g. what documents they should bring, who they should ask for and what form the interview will take.
 - E. Prepare questions you will ask all candidates to help make the process equitable and fair.
 - F. Plan questions which will allow the candidates to talk about experiences gained whilst at school/college, or doing unpaid work experience.
 - G. Be clear about the selection criteria.
- *Your training provider may offer to shortlist for you. This may be an attractive timesaving option, but it also reduces your overall control of the process.*
 - *It is advisable to have clear documented records of shortlisting and interviews to enable you to give structured feedback to unsuccessful candidates.*
 - *Remember that you must apply equal opportunities, so you cannot automatically discount an applicant who is older than you expected!*
 - *If the candidate has higher levels of qualifications than you asked for, check with the training provider whether they are eligible for the government funding for the training element of the apprenticeship.*
 - *You will probably find that applications are fairly short on content, so it may be difficult to shortlist. In this scenario, consider inviting as many candidates as possible for face-to-face assessments.*
 - *For some sample interview questions please see [Appendix 3](#).*
 - *Creating a group or individual task for candidates to complete can be an excellent way to assess interpersonal and communication skills. For example:*
 - *Ask candidates to use equipment or materials to make something to assess planning and problem solving skills and the creativity of individual ideas.*
 - *Set a team working challenge e.g. organising a fictitious charity fundraising event.*
 - *Set individuals a scenario exercise relating to prioritising tasks that might be involved in the job they've applied for.*

6. Holding interviews, selecting and appointing

- A. Begin the interview with an informal chat to put candidates at ease and encourage them to be more open.
- B. Give them a tour of the office and introduce them to colleagues they would be working with.
- C. Inform them of the date you expect to have made a decision.
- D. Once a candidate has been selected good practice is a phone call to notify them that they are your preferred candidate, and you are taking up their references.
- E. Notify unsuccessful candidates and offer feedback.
- F. Take up references and begin any other relevant pre-employment checks (e.g. confirming their right to work in the UK).
- G. Notify training provider who your successful candidate is.

- *Ask existing young employees and apprentices to act as ushers during the interview process as this will encourage them to ask questions they may not feel confident to ask managers.*
- *It is likely that the majority of candidates will not be practised at interviews. Try to create an informal and supportive environment to encourage the candidates to relax.*
- *Remember this could be the young person's first interview – if they are struggling to answer questions help them out by using probing questions.*
- *Rather than using conventional interview techniques, it may be better to use a more informal approach by assessing their enthusiasm and motivation rather than academic credentials and existing skills.*

7. Apprentice Agreements

- A. An Apprentice Agreement is very similar to a normal employment contract, but reflects that the relationship includes learning and teaching.
- B. Along with all the normal contractual information that's included for all employees the apprentice's contract must also include the following:
- Skill, trade or occupation which the apprentice can expect to learn
 - Name the Apprenticeship framework and level
 - Start date and length of contract
 - Estimated completion of learning date
- C. Other information which may be useful to include
- a. The right to time off to attend college and take examinations
 - b. Details of how progress will be reviewed and monitored and at what intervals

- *Apprentices are covered by a contract of employment and have similar rights to other employees and are also covered by Employment Law.*
- *For further information on Apprenticeship agreements*
<http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/partners/policy/apprenticeship%20agreement.aspx>

8. Supporting apprentices

Most apprentices, unless they are already part of your workforce, will probably be quite new to the world of work, so the way they are supported and managed will be crucial. Like any other employee good management and supervision will help them learn and develop more quickly.

The apprentice manager should set clear work plans, provide informal coaching and feedback on tasks which will help apprentices develop. Let staff know that apprentices are young people with little or no experience of the workplace, and ask them to be patient when supporting or training their new colleague. If the apprentice is working in a large team, or based in a different location to their line manager, it can be helpful to have another colleague supporting the apprentice as a mentor or buddy, to provide additional support. Ensure you plan ahead and reserve time to spend developing a relationship with your apprentice. There is nothing worse than starting a new job, and people being too busy to give any time.

In the early days of employment, it is important to ensure that sufficient training and support is provided to ensure that the apprentice has a busy and fulfilling experience whilst at work. Young people may not be aware of workplace procedures, so will need more support during the first few weeks of their Apprenticeship in order to settle in to their role. Prepare a thorough induction to ensure you have told your new recruit about the expected standards of behaviour. An apprentice, through lack of maturity or inexperience, may not meet your organisation's expected standards of behaviour at first. The manager should pick up any issues (i.e. lateness, inappropriate use of mobile phone) as soon as they emerge rather than waiting for the next one-to-one meeting. With this type of support an apprentice is highly likely to develop appropriate behaviours. There should be a much higher threshold than is usually applied to other employees before formal processes for managing under-performance or absence issues are triggered.

It is worth bearing in mind that some young people may have experienced challenging circumstances in their lives, for example those coming out of care or with caring responsibilities at home. Your new employee may not have had the benefit of parental support in starting work.

In the vast majority of cases, managers do not report any concerns with their apprentices, and are delighted by their levels of enthusiasm and motivation to learn. It's important to agree on protected time for the apprentice to work towards their qualification. This may involve "day release" to attend college, or training may be delivered in the workplace. In the latter case, it's important to agree which day of the week should be treated as the "training day", and to ensure the wider team are aware that this is effectively "study time" for the apprentice.

9. Health and safety of a young person

It is important to consider the health and safety requirements for the apprentice at the start of, and during, their employment with you. As you may be recruiting a young person aged under the age of 18, a special risk assessment should be completed that takes into account these responsibilities:

- Risks to all young people under 18 years of age, before they start work;
- Their psychological or physical immaturity, inexperience, and lack of awareness of existing or potential risks;
- If under 16, their parents must be provided with a copy of the risk assessment;
- Control measures introduced to eliminate or minimise the risks, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Sample risk assessments are attached at [Appendix 4](#), and should be signed and agreed by the Apprentice when they start work. You must take these specific factors into account:

- The fitting-out and layout of the workplace and the particular site where they will work;
- The nature of any physical, biological and chemical agents they will be exposed to, for how long and to what extent;
- What types of work equipment will be used and how this will be handled;
- How the work and processes involved are organised;
- The need to assess and provide health and safety training;
- Risks from the particular agents, processes and work.

Important points to remember:

- You must have Employers Liability Insurance (ELI).
- You should notify your insurer that a young person is employed.
- You must possess a written Health & Safety policy.
- You must display a completed Health & Safety Law poster.
- You must have First Aid arrangements in place.
- All supervisors and trainers directly involved with apprentices must have the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service check (see below).
- You must adhere to the Data Protection Act and keep all apprentices' personal details confidential.

The Health & Safety Executive provides useful additional information:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/youngpeople/index.htm>.

10. Child Protection & Disclosure and Barring Service checks

People under the age of 18 are legally classed as “vulnerable” and your organisation should take this into account when recruiting them as apprentices. However this does not mean that every person coming into contact with the young person must have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

A line manager or supervisor may require a DBS check in the following circumstances:

- Where the apprentice may be vulnerable (e.g. special needs, someone who has been in our looked after care);
- Where the apprentice is likely to be regularly alone with that adult as part of their work;
- Where the placement has a residential component.

Guidance around DBS checks can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance>.

TOP TIPS WHEN HIRING AN APPRENTICE

1. **Choose the right framework:** This will ensure that your apprentice is gaining a nationally recognized qualification whilst they work for you.
2. **Use the National Apprenticeship Service website:** Here you can advertise your vacancies and contact potential candidates.
3. **Give the apprentice a mentor:** The apprentice will be able to approach this person with any queries or concerns during their employment - using an ex apprentice is a good idea as they will understand the type of support the new recruit needs.
4. **Give feedback:** Clearly let the apprentice know what is expected of them and have regular meetings to see if they are reaching these goals. Apprentices need to know what they're doing well and where they need to improve in order to maximize their potential.
5. **Integrate the apprentice into your business:** Don't look at the apprenticeship as a temporary position, but provide an opportunity for growth within the company.
6. **Have a two week probation period:** This will let you see how the apprentice will operate within your company, before committing to full time employment.
7. **Encourage** the apprentice to further their skills with a higher apprenticeship.
8. **Motivate!** Make sure the apprentice feels like an important part of your business by recognising their achievements.