



THE CAREERS &  
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Lancashire  
Skills Hub



Part of the  
Lancashire Combined  
County Authority

Your guide to **employing**  
**Apprentices** within Lancashire

# LANCASHIRE EMPLOYER HANDBOOK 2026



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# ABOUT US

The Lancashire Careers Hub is a collaborative network bringing together schools, colleges, employers, training providers, and careers professionals to improve careers education across the region.

It works closely with businesses to create opportunities that help young people prepare for successful working lives. The Hub strongly advocates for apprenticeships as a high-quality pathway into skilled employment, offering hands-on experience alongside qualifications.

By championing employer engagement and bridging the gap between education and industry, the Careers Hub plays a vital role in growing Lancashire's future workforce.

Learn more at [www.lancashirecareershub.co.uk](http://www.lancashirecareershub.co.uk)

# CONTENT TABLE

4

Introduction

6

Benefits of Hiring an Apprentice

8

Understanding Apprenticeships

10

Recruitment Process

12

Apprenticeship Induction

14

Programme Structure and Key Dates

16

Supervision and Mentoring

18

Retention Strategies

20

Off-the-Job Training

22

Career Progression

# INTRODUCTION

Hear more from Sara and Kay on how to get the most from this guide

This booklet is designed to provide employers with a practical and informative guide to supporting apprenticeships within their organisation.

Whether you're considering hiring your first apprentice or looking to improve an existing programme, this handbook covers each stage of the journey — from recruitment and induction to mentoring and long-term progression.

It includes key responsibilities, best practices, and compliance considerations to help you create a structured and successful apprenticeship programme.

By following this guidance, you'll gain the tools and confidence to ensure your apprentice thrives and makes a meaningful contribution to your business.

- ▶ Overview of employer responsibilities and expectations
- ▶ Covers each stage of the apprenticeship lifecycle
- ▶ Aligns with government and training provider frameworks
- ▶ Supports inclusive and high-quality apprenticeship delivery
- ▶ Includes advice on mentoring and retention
- ▶ Signposts useful resources and support networks
- ▶ Encourages proactive planning and reflection
- ▶ Promotes long-term skills development and sustainability



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Employing and apprentice – GOV.UK
- ▶ **Link two:** Apprenticeships – Lancashire Work Based Learning Forum
- ▶ **Link three:** Apprenticeship advice - Lancashire Skills Hub
- ▶ **Link four:** Apprenticeships for Employers – UCLan

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Keep this guide on hand and review it regularly with your team.**

It works best when used as a live resource, updated with notes, ideas, and your own examples as the programme develops.

# BENEFITS OF HIRING AN APPRENTICE

Hiring an apprentice is a strategic way to strengthen your workforce while giving someone valuable experience and training.

Apprenticeships bring enthusiasm, fresh perspectives, and real-time learning into your business. They also allow you to shape future employees to your organisational culture and skill needs.

Employers consistently report higher staff retention, increased productivity, and improved morale when apprentices are successfully integrated into the team.

With government support and financial incentives available, taking on an apprentice is both a cost-effective and socially responsible way to invest in your people and your business growth.



Learn about the benefits of hiring an apprentice from Yasmine at Veka

- ▶ Opportunity to develop staff tailored to your business
- ▶ Cost-effective with access to government co-funding
- ▶ Encourages loyalty and reduces recruitment costs
- ▶ Increases employee engagement and team morale
- ▶ Helps fill sector-specific skills shortages
- ▶ Strengthens your employer brand and CSR credentials
- ▶ Builds future leadership within your team
- ▶ Can improve diversity and inclusion within your workforce



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Apprenticeships for Employers – GOV.UK
- ▶ **Link two:** Employer Guides – Apprenticeships.gov.uk
- ▶ **Link three:** Apprenticeships – Lancashire County Council
- ▶ **Link four:** Apprenticeships – Lancashire and South Cumbria Training Hub

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Hiring apprentices isn't just for entry-level roles.** Apprenticeships can support progression all the way to degree and master's level, helping to upskill your existing team and retain top talent.

# UNDERSTANDING APPRENTICESHIPS



Bryony from Air Frame Designs explains her experience working with Apprentices

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that combine real work with structured learning.

Apprentices work alongside experienced staff to develop practical job skills while studying for a formal qualification. Programmes range from intermediate to degree level and are available across a wide variety of sectors.

Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 or over and must meet specific standards approved by industry.

Employers work with training providers to deliver a tailored development journey that fits both the role and the learner.

This approach ensures apprentices gain real value while delivering measurable benefits to the organisation.

- ▶ Blend of workplace learning and off-the-job training
- ▶ Apprentices are paid employees, not unpaid trainees
- ▶ Programmes last between 12 months and 4 years
- ▶ Suitable for new recruits or existing employees
- ▶ Learning outcomes are aligned with national standards
- ▶ Apprenticeships are quality-assured and externally assessed
- ▶ Suitable for all ages (16+) and backgrounds
- ▶ Funded through government support or Apprenticeship Levy



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Search the Apprenticeships – Skills England
- ▶ **Link two:** Apprenticeships – Chorley Council
- ▶ **Link three:** The Apprenticeship Guide – UK Resource
- ▶ **Link four:** Apprenticeships Work – Edge Foundation

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Think of apprenticeships as a career pathway, not just a job.**  
They offer structured, long-term development that can benefit your business and the individual well beyond their initial training.

# RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruiting the right apprentice begins with identifying the role's purpose and aligning it to an appropriate apprenticeship standard.

From there, you'll create a job description, advertise the opportunity, and conduct interviews — often in partnership with your chosen training provider.

The goal is to recruit individuals with potential, enthusiasm, and a willingness to learn.

You don't need to find someone with all the skills on day one — that's what the apprenticeship is for.

A fair, open and transparent process will help you attract high-quality candidates who are ready to grow with your business.



Find out more about the recruitment process at Graham Engineering from Ian

- ▶ Define the role and required apprenticeship standard
- ▶ Create a clear and inclusive job description
- ▶ Promote the role through relevant platforms and networks
- ▶ Work with your training provider on candidate outreach
- ▶ Conduct structured interviews with equal opportunity practices
- ▶ Assess potential, not just qualifications or experience
- ▶ Clarify expectations from both parties during interviews
- ▶ Confirm funding eligibility and finalise agreements



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Employers find apprenticeship training – GOV.UK
- ▶ **Link two:** How to recruit an apprentice using apprenticeship services
- ▶ **Link three:** Find Apprenticeships - GOV.UK
- ▶ **Link four:** How to recruit and apprentice - Amazing Apprenticeships

## TIPS AND TRICKS

Don't overlook candidates with limited experience — **strong communication skills, reliability and curiosity often signal great apprentice potential.**

# APPRENTICESHIP INDUCTION



Jess from MHA talks through  
their Apprenticeship  
induction process

A structured induction sets the tone for the apprenticeship experience. It helps your new apprentice feel welcomed, prepared and confident.

Induction should introduce the role, the workplace culture, the apprenticeship training plan and support structures.

Taking the time to get this right improves retention, reduces anxiety and ensures a smoother start for everyone involved.

It's also a great opportunity to connect the apprentice to their team and outline clear expectations around learning, behaviour and progress.

Remember, many apprentices are new to the workplace — your support and clarity are key to their early success.

- ▶ Provide a warm welcome and introduce the team
- ▶ Explain the job role and how it contributes to the organisation
- ▶ Outline the training plan and qualification structure
- ▶ Share policies on health, safety, conduct and attendance
- ▶ Confirm points of contact and escalation routes
- ▶ Set initial goals, timelines and review points
- ▶ Assign a mentor or buddy for early support
- ▶ Encourage feedback and answer any early questions



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Improving apprentice experience – Learning and Work
- ▶ **Link two:** Apprenticeship bursary for care leavers – GOV.UK
- ▶ **Link three:** Induction to the apprenticeship - FE News
- ▶ **Link four:** Effective onboarding for apprentices - AOC
- ▶ **Link five:** Apprenticeship recruitment booklet - Burnley GOV

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Use an induction checklist and keep it consistent** — it gives apprentices a sense of security and shows your business takes their development seriously.

# PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND KEY DATES

A well-defined programme structure provides clarity and direction for everyone involved.

Apprenticeships involve a mixture of workplace duties, training sessions, assessments, and development reviews — all of which should be mapped out clearly from the start.

Collaborate with your training provider to establish a realistic and achievable timeline, and share this with the apprentice during induction.

Regular check-ins and milestone reviews are essential to ensure steady progress and early intervention if issues arise.

Knowing what's coming helps apprentices stay focused and confident as they move through each stage of their learning journey.



Helen talks through  
Westinghouse's Apprenticeship  
programme structure

- ▶ Establish key milestones from start to completion
- ▶ Include induction, reviews, assessments, and EPA timelines
- ▶ Use an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to track progress
- ▶ Agree key responsibilities with the training provider
- ▶ Set calendar reminders for reviews and training sessions
- ▶ Build in flexibility for learning needs or workplace changes
- ▶ Encourage apprentices to keep a personal development log
- ▶ Use structured templates to review progress regularly



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Programme Timeline Support – NLTG
- ▶ **Link two:** Workforce Development Resources – Chorley Council
- ▶ **Link three:** Sector Planning Advice – LSC Training Hub

## TIPS AND TRICKS

Visual timelines or journey maps help apprentices understand their path and stay motivated — it also shows you're invested in their success.

# SUPERVISION AND MENTORING

Jackie from Lancashire Teaching Hospitals explains how they carry out supervision and mentoring

Consistent supervision and mentoring are vital to an apprentice's confidence, performance, and long-term development.

A good mentor helps apprentices understand expectations, overcome challenges, and recognise their achievements.

While supervisors support task-related performance, mentors offer guidance on personal development and career goals.

Mentoring isn't about having all the answers — it's about listening, encouraging reflection, and providing constructive feedback.

Structured mentoring also creates a stronger connection between the apprentice and your organisation, making it more likely they'll stay with you beyond the programme.

- ▶ Assign a mentor who is approachable and experienced
- ▶ Schedule weekly or fortnightly check-ins
- ▶ Use coaching-style questions to build independence
- ▶ Recognise achievements and effort regularly
- ▶ Provide feedback on both soft and technical skills
- ▶ Help apprentices navigate workplace dynamics
- ▶ Encourage questions and problem-solving
- ▶ Provide resources or signpost additional support



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Strategic Development – Strategic Development Network
- ▶ **Link two:** Individuals – Able Futures
- ▶ **Link three:** Workplace Mentoring Tools – Lancs Forum
- ▶ **Link four:** Supporting your apprentice – Apprenticeships GOV

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Mentors don't need to be managers** — sometimes a peer or senior colleague creates the most relatable and supportive relationship for an apprentice.

# RETENTION STRATEGIES



Learn about how Ashbridge work to retain apprentices from Nazma

Retaining your apprentice begins from the very first day. Positive early experiences, clear development plans and strong support networks all play a role in building trust and engagement.

Apprentices who feel valued and see a future within your organisation are more likely to complete their programme and continue as employees.

Retention is also about creating an inclusive culture where learning is encouraged and mistakes are seen as part of growth.

Think of retention not as the final step, but as a thread running through the whole apprenticeship journey.

- ▶ Discuss long-term goals and future opportunities early on
- ▶ Offer continued learning or progression routes post-programme
- ▶ Celebrate achievements, even small wins
- ▶ Provide peer recognition or team shout-outs
- ▶ Include apprentices in team meetings and decisions
- ▶ Ask for feedback about their experience
- ▶ Offer flexible support based on their learning style
- ▶ Encourage them to become future mentors



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Retention Tips – association of apprentices
- ▶ **Link two:** Completion Support – NLTG
- ▶ **Link three:** Testimonials from apprentices – Wyre Council
- ▶ **Link four:** Apprentice Retention Resources – Association of Apprentices

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Apprentices who feel seen, supported and stretched are far more likely to stay** — small things like praise and recognition really do matter.

# OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

Off-the-job training is a fundamental requirement of all apprenticeship programmes and accounts for at least 20% of the apprentice's paid hours.

This training is designed to help them gain new knowledge, skills and behaviours outside of their day-to-day role.

It can include classroom learning, online modules, shadowing, project work, or attending workshops.

Employers must ensure this time is protected, structured and relevant to the apprenticeship standard.

Done well, off-the-job training enhances performance, builds confidence, and helps apprentices connect theory with practice in a meaningful way.



Will from Work Based Learning  
Forum explains off the  
job training

- ▶ Must total 20% of working hours (paid time)
- ▶ Can include training provider-led sessions or workplace projects
- ▶ Must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship standard
- ▶ Can be delivered flexibly — block release or regular days
- ▶ Must be documented and monitored by the provider
- ▶ Should include reflective learning and reviews
- ▶ Can involve shadowing, research, or external visits
- ▶ Supported by a commitment from both employer and apprentice



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Business recruitment and training support
- ▶ **Link two:** Understanding off the job hours – Lancaster & Morcambe College
- ▶ **Link three:** Best Practice Support – LSC Training Hub
- ▶ **Link four:** The role of an apprenticeship provider – LCR Be More

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Integrate off-the-job training into your weekly workflow** — this avoids disruption and makes learning a routine part of the apprentice's role.

# CAREER PROGRESSION



Georgia from Victrex talks through Career Progression for Apprentices

An apprenticeship is the starting point of a longer career journey, not the end.

Supporting career progression shows your apprentice that you're invested in their future, and it helps you build a pipeline of skilled talent from within.

This can include offering higher-level apprenticeships, additional qualifications, or opportunities for promotion.

Talk to apprentices early about their goals and encourage them to take ownership of their development.

When apprentices can see a future with you, they are more motivated, loyal, and engaged in their current role.

- ▶ Discuss aspirations in review meetings and 1:1s
- ▶ Signpost higher-level apprenticeship options
- ▶ Provide access to CPD and short courses
- ▶ Offer new challenges or projects as they grow
- ▶ Share internal career paths or progression stories
- ▶ Promote internal vacancies or development programmes
- ▶ Encourage apprentices to mentor others as they progress
- ▶ Support personal goal-setting beyond the apprenticeship



## RESOURCES

- ▶ **Link one:** Occupational Maps – Skills England
- ▶ **Link two:** Understanding Apprenticeship Progression - Learning and Work
- ▶ **Link three:** Progression Pathways – Lancs Forum
- ▶ **Link four:** Apprentice Careers Hub – LMI Lancashire

## TIPS AND TRICKS

**Retain your investment by planning next steps before the programme ends** — apprentices are more likely to stay if they can see their future with you.



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