

I'm looking to undertake an Apprenticeship, what do I need to know?

How can I get onto an apprenticeship?

There are several ways in which you can get onto an apprenticeship.

If you are already working for a company and decide that you would like to further your self with training, you could approach your company to request their support for you through an apprenticeship.

You could search for vacancies advertised for apprenticeships. There are several different avenues that you could go down to search. For example, the Job Centre Plus website (www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk), job agencies, specialist apprenticeship websites (A good website to look at when searching for apprenticeship vacancies is www.apprenticeships.org.uk), local newspapers etc. You could also try contacting your local college to see if they have any contacts for employers that are willing to take on board apprentices.

You could approach local companies to see if they are willing to create a position for an apprentice.

If you can not find an employer willing to offer you an apprenticeship, you can enroll on a 'Programme led Apprenticeship'. This programme enables you to start your studies at college, whilst getting a little work experience which then enables you to move onto an apprenticeship with an employer once you have found one. Your college may even be able to help find you an employer or put you in touch with contacts they may have. However, the 'Programme led Apprenticeship' is only available in England at present. For more information on the 'Programme led Apprenticeship' have a look on the direct gov website: www.direct.gov.uk and search under 'Programme led Apprenticeship'.

What help is there for me when looking into doing an apprenticeship?

'**Connexions**' is a Government funded programme that provides assistance with career advice, information and help to people looking at apprenticeships. They may even be able to put you in touch with companies advertising for apprentices. However, connexions do only offer their services to individuals aged between 13 and 19. For more information you can look at the website, which is www.connexions-direct.com or alternatively you can contact their Helpline free on 080 800 13219.

Alternatively, '**Learn Direct**' offer careers advice, information and help to people looking at apprenticeships. They offer their services to people of all ages. For more information you can look at their website, which is www.learndirect.co.uk or alternatively you can contact their Helpline free on 0800 101 901.

Who will fund the learning for my apprentice?

Funding for apprenticeships is mainly provided by the Government (The Learning Skills Council), but in some cases a contribution from the employer may be required. This depends on the age of the candidate:

- Apprentices aged 16 – 18: Funded 100% by the Government (The Learning Skills Council)
- Apprentices aged 19 - 24: Funded up to 50% by the Government (The Learning Skills Council) and the rest by the employer.
- Apprentices aged 25+: A contribution is made by the Government (The Learning Skills Council) and the rest by the employer.

The funding is paid directly to the learning provider upon completion of the apprenticeship.

How much will I earn whilst on an apprenticeship?

Aged 16-18:

As of 1st August 2009, the minimum that an apprentice aged 16 to 18 is legally entitled to be paid increased from £80 per week to £95 per week. However recent research shows that the current average most apprentices get paid is £175 a week, but this all depends on the employer. Apprentices aged 16 to 18 are not entitled to National Minimum Wage for their age range.

Aged 19+:

If an apprentice starts their apprenticeship aged 19+ or turns 19 within their first year of beginning their apprenticeship, the apprentice is legally entitled to be paid national minimum wage for their age range, which is £4.83 for 18-21 and £5.80 for 22+, as of 1st October 2009.

Some candidates may be entitled to additional benefits such as child care and transport funding. For more information on this or to see if you are eligible go to the **Directgov** website, which is www.direct.gov.uk and search under 'Care to Learn' or alternatively contact their Learner Support Helpline direct on **0800 121 8989**.

How many hours do I work whilst on an apprenticeship?

To complete an apprenticeship the apprentice has to do a minimum of 16 hours in the work place, however most apprentices are employed on a full time basis, which is usually between 37-40 hours per week.

How often will I attend to the Learning Provider?

There are two different ways in which you may be asked to do this. It could be by "Day Release", which is where you attend the External Learning Provider for one day a week. Or it could be by "Block Release", which is where you attend the External Learning Provider for a consecutive amount of days, for example one week per month.

What qualifications do I need to get onto an apprenticeship?

To get onto an apprenticeship you do not necessarily need to have any formal qualifications, but it may help to have GCSE's in Maths, English and Science. You do however have to be living in England and you are not allowed to be in full time education. It is also preferable for entry onto a Level 3 apprenticeship to have already gained a Level 2 apprenticeship, however it is not essential dependant on previous experience and skills.

What is required from me as an apprentice?

As an apprentice it is required that you attend college regularly, achieve all targets set for you and conduct your self in a professional manner at all times.

Apprentices should be enthusiastic, self-motivated and dedicated in what they are doing. They should show willingness to want to learn and progress. They should also make sure that they are always punctual for work, meetings and when attending sessions with their learning provider.

What are my employer's responsibilities whilst on an apprenticeship?

It is your employer's responsibility to:

- Give you an induction into your role.
- To appoint you with a member of staff to be your mentor.
- Provide you with ongoing support throughout your training and employment.
- Allow you time out of work to attend the learning provider.
- Allow you time out of work for study leave when appropriate.
- Pay your wages and national insurance contributions.
- Provide you with all the normal benefits that all other employees get e.g. holiday pay, maternity leave, company benefits etc.

What should I know regarding Health & Safety?

Awareness of Health & Safety in the workplace is very important and should not be taken lightly, especially when working with potentially dangerous machinery as you may come across in various aspects of the Automotive Industry. It is your employer's legal responsibility to make sure that all their staff members have a safe environment to work. Legally your employer has to have Health & Safety guidelines in place and provide you with Health & Safety training.

Not only does your employer have a responsibility towards Health & Safety in the workplace, but you do too. It is your responsibility to be aware and to make sure you carry out tasks in the correct manner that you have been shown.

If you are under the age of 18 years, you are still classed as a minor. So you need to be aware that legally, sure to Health & Safety Regulations, you may not be able to operate certain machinery or carry out certain tasks.

What are my Learning Provider's responsibilities?

The responsibilities of your learning provider are:

- To deliver your off-the-job training.
- To provide you with the learning support you need throughout the duration of your apprenticeship.
- To look after the paper work side of things.
- To communicate your progress regularly with your employer.

What are the benefits of carrying out an apprenticeship?

There are many benefits and advantages to carrying out an apprenticeship. Firstly, you get to earn a wage whilst still learning and gaining qualifications. An apprenticeship provides you with work based, practical experience whilst gaining the skills and knowledge you need to do the job and progress. It gives you a head start with the practical working experience that people in full time education will not have. It may also fast track you onto other courses.

Whilst you are learning you are still getting the normal benefits of being employed. For example paid holiday leave, Statutory Sick Pay, eligibility for Maternity Leave, company perks, possibly the option to open a pension scheme with your company, possibly the option to join a Trade Union, etc. For more information on what you will be entitled to as an employed apprentice have a look at these following web sites www.dwp.gov.uk & www.worksmart.org.uk.

You can apply for an apprenticeship at any time of the year, there is no set intake date. You can also apply for an apprenticeship even if you already have a job.

Apprenticeships give individuals the opportunity to earn money whilst learning, which is ideal for individuals who prefer to be in employment rather than full time education.

Latest research shows that people with qualifications tend to earn more than those without. On average they earn £100,000 more throughout their lifetime than other employees.