

Apprenticeships: Not just for school leavers

With the launch of the Government's Apprenticeship Reforms in May, apprenticeships now offer great opportunities for individuals of all ages and abilities not just 16 year old school leavers, including:

- Parents returning to work after raising a family
- A-Level students wanting a loan-free route to a degree
- People wanting to re-train for a new career

The Government has pledged to create 3 million apprenticeships across all levels by 2020. (Source: GOV.UK)

What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a way to earn and learn. As an apprentice, you'll be employed by a company and paid a wage for the work that you do. Most of your training will be in the workplace but you'll also be supported by a training provider to achieve qualifications. This could be at a college, a university or training provider, at work or online.

Apprenticeships are offered by large and small companies across a wide range of industries and take between one and five years to complete. There are four different levels – intermediate, advanced, higher or degree – dependent on qualifications and skills.

What are the benefits?

- Earn a wage and get holiday pay
- Have no university debts
- Work alongside experienced staff
- Gain skills that employers need
- Get time for study related to your role
- Increase your future earning potential

After finishing, 77% of apprentices stay with the same employer, 46% received a pay rise, and 36% reported getting a promotion. (Source: GOV.UK)

How much will I earn?

Apprentices under 19, and those aged 19 or over in their first year, will earn at least the national minimum wage for apprentices (£3.50 per hour) but many companies pay more than this, particularly for higher level apprenticeships.

At 19+, once you have completed your first year, you must be paid at least the minimum wage rate for your age.

Apprentices are entitled to the same rights as other employees: a contract of employment and at least 20 days paid holiday per year.

How to find an apprenticeship

Apprenticeship vacancies are listed on gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship. If you have a particular employer in mind check their website careers page.

The National Careers Service can help you find opportunities in your local area and support you with writing your application and preparing for interviews. Call us on 0800 100 900 and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

A mature apprentice's story

I came to the National Careers Service for support after returning from travelling the world. Having trained as an actor and then worked in a stressful job in finance, I wanted help to explore my options.

The careers adviser discussed various routes with me including working in construction, apprenticeships and training within a trade and provided links for me to explore. I followed their advice and gained a place on a plumbing apprenticeship with the first place they put me in touch with.

Had I not contacted the National Careers Service I would have possibly travelled some more and even gone back into finance. However, I have been able to take an alternative route and one that I could not have seen myself ever doing.

