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A GUIDE TO THE SUPPORT AVAILABLE TO APPRENTICES

INTRODUCTION

We all need a bit of help sometimes, but it can be difficult to know what support is available, or who or how to ask. The National Apprenticeship Service is committed to making sure apprenticeships are open and available to all individuals.

This guide explains what support you can expect during your apprenticeship programme and where you might go to for help. Whether you are at the start of your career or progressing higher up the career ladder, it's essential to know what support is available and how this can be accessed.

Remember, your employer and training provider recruited you and want you to be successful in your apprenticeship. If you have any concerns, big or small, it's ok to speak up and ask for help.

APPRENTICE SUPPORT NEEDS

CONTRACTUAL /
EMPLOYMENT

FINANCIAL

LEARNING &
DEVELOPMENT

HEALTH &
WELLBEING



MY EMPLOYMENT

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MY EMPLOYER?

Your employer has an essential part to play in developing and delivering your apprenticeship programme. As well as off-the-job training (provided by your training provider), you will receive on-the-job training from your manager and other work colleagues.

Line Manager

It should be clear who your line manager / supervisor is from day one. Your line manager should:

- support you to develop your knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve your apprenticeship and become fully competent in your role
- help you to understand your job role and how this fits into the wider organisation
- be aware of the requirements of your apprenticeship and give you opportunities to gain hands-on-experience that directly relates to your apprenticeship programme
- coach you on how to carry out a particular task or allow you to work shadow to see the task being carried out and learn from this
- give you constructive feedback to help you identify where you are doing well and areas for improvement
- help you prepare for your end-point assessment – depending on the assessment methods, your line manager may even need to be present or contribute.

You can expect regular reviews with your line manager where you can both discuss your work, your apprenticeship and review your progress. Some of these reviews will also include your training provider. Your line manager will give you constructive feedback to help you identify where you are doing well and in some cases areas on which you need to improve.

Your line manager is there to support you to develop and progress towards your achievement of the apprenticeship. If you have any questions, concerns or issues with your employment, training or on matters such as your health and wellbeing, your line manager should be someone you can discuss these with to seek their help and support.

Workplace mentor

Where it is possible, in addition to your line manager, you may also have a workplace mentor or 'buddy'. A mentor is usually a colleague who you can talk to in confidence about your apprenticeship, and who should support you to raise concerns or make suggestions to improve your experience.

If you work for a large employer where there is a union, you may be able to get some additional support from your union representative or your [union learning](#) representative.

WHAT IS MY EMPLOYMENT STATUS AS AN APPRENTICE?

An apprenticeship is a real job. Under all circumstances, you should be employed from day one.

On starting your apprenticeship, you have a contract of employment which is long enough to complete the apprenticeship successfully. You will be asked to sign two documents: an **apprenticeship agreement** and a **commitment statement**.

The **apprenticeship agreement** will confirm your employment arrangements, the purpose of the apprenticeship agreement is to identify:

- the skill, trade or occupation for which the apprentice is being trained
- the apprenticeship standard or framework connected to the apprenticeship
- the dates during which the apprenticeship is expected to take place
- the amount of off-the-job-training that the apprentice is to receive.

The **commitment statement** is a separate document which will explain what everyone (you, your employer and your training provider) has to do to make sure your apprenticeship goes to plan. The commitment statement will cover:

- What your training will consist of and a schedule of when it will happen to suit the needs of both you and your employer
- Details of what your employer and training provider have promised to deliver including any flexibilities and support
- What they will expect from you, both as an employee and as a student
- How to handle queries or resolve complaints.

All three parties must agree and sign the commitment statement. If you are unsure of what any of the terms mean or if the apprenticeship as described will be suitable, it is a good idea to discuss these with your employer, training provider or maybe with a trusted colleague, friend or family member.

WHAT SHOULD I BE PAID?

Levels of salaries for apprentices are variable and are dependent on many factors such as:

- the level of apprenticeship you apply for
- the sector you are working in e.g. engineering, retail, health care, sciences etc.
- the type of employer you are working for e.g. small

business, large corporation, public or private sector

- your age, experience and existing qualifications

The **National Minimum Wage** for apprentices from April 2021 is £4.30 per hour, but many employers pay more than this. This rate applies to apprentices aged 16 to 18 and those aged 19 or over who are in the first year of their apprenticeship. Rates change annually in April.

You must be paid at least the National Minimum Wage or National Living Wage rate for your age if you are an apprentice aged 19 or over and have completed your first year.

Starting salaries for lots of apprenticeships are much higher than the minimum. Some apprentices may start at the minimum level but can increase their salary as they become more competent in their job role.

If you have any concerns about your salary or believe you are being underpaid, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance. Your line manager will be able to help you with your employer's process to query your salary.

If having queried your salary with your employer you still believe you are being underpaid you can contact [Acas](#) an independent body who provides free advice on employment rights, rules and how to raise and resolve problems at work.

WHAT HOLIDAYS AM I ENTITLED TO?

Your holiday entitlement should be clearly written into your contract of employment.

As a minimum you'll get at least 20 days paid holiday per year plus bank holidays.

You can use the [holiday calculator](#) on GOV.UK to check your minimum holiday entitlement.

If you have any questions or concerns about your holidays you should discuss these with your line manager.

HOW MANY HOURS PER WEEK SHOULD I BE WORKING?

Minimum Working Hours

The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on you working 30 hours a week or more, including any off-the-job training undertaken (except part time apprenticeships which are a minimum of 16 hours per week). You must work enough hours each week so that you can undertake sufficient, regular training and on-the-job activity.

The time spent on off-the-job training should be at least 20% of your working hours. Your employer must allow you time to complete your apprenticeship within your working hours. If you need support with English and maths

this should also be within your working hours (in addition to the 20% of time for off-the-job training).

Maximum Working Hours

The European Working Time Directive states that young people aged up to 18 can work for maximum of 40 hours per week and not more than 8 hours per day. Those aged over 18 have maximum working hours of 48 hours per week but they can sign an agreement with their employer, should they wish to opt out of the protection provided by the Working Time Directive.

Duration

An apprenticeship takes between one and five years to complete. The duration of an apprenticeship depends on your prior skills, the apprenticeship type/level, and your working hours. (See question on working part-time below).

If you have any concerns about the number of hours you are working or if you are not being given the time (minimum of 20%) to carry out your off-the-job training during working hours you should speak to your line manager and training provider.

CAN I COMPLETE AN APPRENTICESHIP WORKING PART-TIME?

Yes. Where a part-time working pattern is agreed, the duration of the apprenticeship will be extended to allow enough time to complete the apprenticeship successfully. People may wish to apply for or request a part-time programme for a range of reasons, for example a lifestyle choice, to manage caring responsibilities or to help manage a disability or health condition. This may be for the whole apprenticeship or a temporary period.

You, your employer and the training provider must all agree the duration of your apprenticeship.

I HAVE A DISABILITY AND/OR HEALTH CONDITION, WILL MY EMPLOYER BE OKAY WITH THIS?

Employers must make reasonable adjustments to make sure workers with disabilities, or physical or mental health conditions, aren't substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs.

This applies to all workers, including trainees, apprentices, contract workers and business partners.

Reasonable adjustments include:

- [changing the recruitment process](#) so a candidate can be considered for a job
- doing things another way, such as allowing someone with social anxiety disorder to have their own desk instead of hot-desking
- making physical changes to the workplace, like installing a ramp for a wheelchair user or an audio-visual fire alarm for a deaf person
- letting a disabled person work somewhere else, such as on the ground floor for a wheelchair user
- changing their equipment, for instance providing a special keyboard for someone with arthritis
- allowing employees who become disabled to make a phased return to work, including flexible hours or part-time working
- offering employees training opportunities, recreation and refreshment facilities.

You can get advice on reasonable adjustments from the Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) at [your local Jobcentre Plus office](#). You can also apply for [Access to Work](#) if you need extra help.





I'M FEELING OVERWHELMED AND DON'T THINK I CAN CONTINUE ON MY APPRENTICESHIP

Our daily lives can cause a lot of pressure and uncertainty both in and out of work. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed by your workload, your training or perhaps by commitments outside of work, it's a good idea to discuss this with your line manager, your training provider and/or your workplace mentor if you have one. There may well be things they can do to support you, or they might be able to introduce some flexibilities to your apprenticeship that will help reduce the pressure to enable you to successfully continue. Also see wellbeing section below.

WHAT TO DO IF I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MY EMPLOYER?

If you have any concerns or issues with your employer, it's often best to first discuss these with your line manager or, if you have one, your workplace mentor. You can also talk to your training provider who will be able to support you and facilitate any discussions / actions you might need to take with your employer.

If you are unable to resolve your concerns or issues through discussions you may want to consider taking more formal actions, perhaps through your employer's grievance policy.

Further information about what you can do if you are dealing with workplace problems is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk). This includes access to [Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk) which provides free and confidential advice to employers, employees and

their representatives on employment rights, best practice and policies, and resolving workplace conflict.

You may also wish to contact [Citizens Advice](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) who could provide you with information and help if you have a problem at work.

I'M THINKING OF LEAVING, I DON'T THINK THIS IS THE RIGHT JOB FOR ME, WHAT CAN I DO?

For some apprentices this is their first job working in a chosen industry, occasionally apprentices decide the job/ industry is not right for them.

If you are feeling like this, you must speak to your employer and training provider as soon as possible. They will want to explore and understand your concerns to see if there is anything they can do which may change your mind and help you to continue. Perhaps speak to other colleagues and ask about their experiences, how they have progressed and what satisfies and motivates them in their job roles.

It might be helpful to access career's information, advice and guidance either via your training provider or the [National Careers Service](https://www.nationalcareersservice.gov.uk). This will allow you to explore your thinking in detail with an independent advisor, who can tell you more about where your apprenticeship qualification could take you in the future.

It may be that with the support of your training provider you can even change your employer, industry and/or apprenticeship standard you are studying.

I AM BEING BULLIED OR HARASSED BY A COLLEAGUE, WHO SHOULD I SPEAK TO?

You should first see if you can sort out the problem informally, possibly speaking to those involved and explaining how it is making you feel. If this is not possible you should talk to your:

- line manager or mentor
- human resources (HR) department
- trade union representative (if you are a member)
- training provider

If this does not work, you should consider making a formal complaint using your employer's grievance procedure.

Further information about what you can do if you are being bullied and/or harassed in the workplace can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

WHAT ARE MY MATERNITY / PATERNITY RIGHTS?

Apprentices have the same maternity and paternity rights as employees. As a pregnant employee you have 4 main legal rights:

- paid time off for antenatal care
- maternity leave
- maternity pay or maternity allowance
- protection against unfair treatment, discrimination or dismissal

Employers cannot change a pregnant employee's contract terms and conditions without agreement - if they do they are in breach of contract. Employers must give pregnant employees time off for antenatal care and pay their normal rate for this time off.

Apprentices are entitled to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave from day one of their employment. It doesn't matter how many hours you work or how long you have worked for your employer.

You should notify your employer and training provider about the pregnancy at least 15 weeks before the beginning of the week the baby is due. If this is not possible (for example because you did not know you were pregnant) the employer must be told as soon as possible.

When you start your maternity leave your apprenticeship will be paused and you will be recorded as having a formal "break in learning". Your apprenticeship will be ready to continue once you return from your agreed period of maternity leave.

For more information on pregnant employee rights and maternity go to [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

If you are the father or pregnant woman's partner, you too have the right to unpaid time off work to go to 2 antenatal appointments. You will also have the right to paternity leave. More information is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Further advice is also available from [Maternity Action](https://www.maternityaction.org.uk) – a UK charity delivering free, specialist advice on employment rights, maternity pay and maternity benefits.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I'M MADE REDUNDANT?

As an apprentice you have the same employment rights as your colleagues. In addition to those rights your training provider must make reasonable efforts to help you find another employer where you can complete your apprenticeship. If you are made redundant within six months of the end of your apprenticeship agreement you may be able to continue your apprenticeship training with your training provider without being employed. If you think you are at risk of being made redundant speak to your training provider.

WHISTLEBLOWING

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which, in the reasonable belief of the whistleblower, is made in the public interest. Whistleblowing disclosures tend to show that one or more of the following has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur:

- a criminal offence (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud)
- a breach of a legal obligation
- a miscarriage of justice
- danger to the health or safety of any individual
- damage to the environment
- deliberate covering up of wrongdoing in the above categories

Your employer is required to have appropriate whistleblowing procedures in place that ensure that concerns are handled properly and fairly.

You can also complain or make a disclosure to ESFA about an education or training provider. Further advice and guidance on how to do this: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-esfa-handles-whistleblowing-disclosures>



FINANCIAL MATTERS

AM I STILL ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS?

If you were already claiming Universal Credit or Tax Credits before starting your apprenticeship, you may still be eligible to claim these to help with your living costs. This will depend on your personal circumstances. Visit the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website to find out how to check your eligibility.

CAN I GET HELP WITH TRAVEL COSTS?

When you undertake an apprenticeship, you must ensure you are able to travel to and from your place of work and training provider and cover the associated costs. There are a number of different schemes available to support you financially while you are looking for an apprenticeship, and for when you have found one.

If you have been claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit, speak to your Jobcentre Plus Work Coach to find out about possible financial assistance towards travel costs, which are incurred when seeking or starting, work.

You may qualify for:

- Access to discounted travel through the Jobcentre Plus Travel Discount Card scheme.

- Help with travel costs via the Jobcentre Plus Flexible support fund.

In some local authority areas, you may be entitled to a travel discount or other benefits. You might want to check with your training provider or your local public transport operator to see if there are schemes available in your local area.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your travel or the costs of travel discuss this with your line manager; it may be that your employer runs a travel to work scheme e.g. cycle to work schemes or loan for season tickets which you could take advantage of or, you might be able to car share with a local colleague. You should also raise this with your training provider who may be aware of other support available.

AM I ABLE TO CLAIM STUDENT DISCOUNT?

More and more businesses are offering discounts to apprentices, so it is always worth asking. Apprentices are entitled to a NUS card through the National Union of Students. The [NUS Apprentice extra discount card](#) costs £11 and offers apprentices many of the same discounts and benefits as other students including discounts on travel.

CAN I GET ANY HELP WITH CHILDCARE EXPENSES?

You may qualify for [help towards childcare costs](#) provided by the government. Visit the [GOV.UK](#) website to find out how to check your eligibility.

CAN I GET HELP WITH CLOTHING AND OTHER EXPENSES ASSOCIATED WITH WORKING?

Support with clothing and other expenses is not widely available. However, if you are claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Universal Credit you may be able to get help with cost of work clothing and equipment to start work from the Jobcentre Plus Flexible Support fund. Speak to your Work Coach before you start work to check your eligibility.

There are also charities like [Dress for Success](#) (for women) and [Suited and Booted](#) (for men) that offer free work clothes and advice on presenting yourself.

If your job role requires you to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) there should be no cost to you, your employer should provide you with all necessary PPE. If you have concerns that you do not have appropriate PPE you should speak to your line manager and / or training provider.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN I GET IF I AM A CARE LEAVER?

If you are under 25 years old when you start an apprenticeship and have previously been in the care of the local authority, you may be eligible for a non-repayable bursary to help you transition into work.

A bursary payment of £1000 may be made to you, to help meet the extra costs of starting work and to support you in the first year of your apprenticeship. Your employer and provider will also receive a payment to help offer you any additional support you require as you complete your apprenticeship.

Your training provider should ask you about this at the beginning of your apprenticeship, if you think this has been missed or you haven't received your payment discuss this with your training provider.

WHERE CAN I ACCESS FREE AND IMPARTIAL ADVICE AND GUIDANCE ON MONEY MATTERS?

The [Money Advice Service](#) provides advice and guidance across a wide range of money matters, including a number of useful tools and calculators to help people manage their money. Their focus is on supporting people who can benefit the most from help or who are going through significant life events – such as saving for a home, dealing with the breakdown of a long-term relationship, or starting a family.





HELP WITH MY LEARNING AND STUDIES

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT FROM MY TRAINING PROVIDER?

Your training provider has a key role to play in providing off-the-job training, assessing progress towards achieving your qualifications and supporting you generally during your apprenticeship. They should work very closely with your employer to ensure that you receive:

- an induction programme on starting
- a detailed training plan (including on-the-job training)
- regular progress reviews
- opportunities to put into practice off-the-job learning so that they can achieve their qualifications/ requirements of the apprenticeship
- mentoring and general support throughout the apprenticeship

This should all be documented in your commitment statement which is part of the apprenticeship agreement that you, your employer and the training provider signed up to at the start of your programme.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN I GET IF I FEEL LIKE I'M FALLING BEHIND OR MISSING DEADLINES?

First of all, don't panic, deadlines are sometimes missed and often for good reason.

At the beginning of your apprenticeship you will, with your employer and training provider, agree a plan of your training including key milestones and progression targets, this will be confirmed in your commitment statement. This plan should be regularly reviewed between all three of you and changes made.

If you are experiencing any difficulties in achieving the milestones and targets set, you should think about, and discuss the reasons for this with both your line manager and training provider as soon as possible. It may be that your plan needs adjusting, or you need some further support from either your employer or training provider.

Also see health and wellbeing below to find out about where to go for support if you are feeling overwhelmed.

WHAT SUPPORT CAN I GET IF I HAVE LEARNING DIFFICULTY OR A DISABILITY?

If you have any learning difficulties and/or disabilities it is helpful if you share this with your training provider as early as possible. Your training provider may have access to additional support which could help you overcome any challenges you are facing.

If you have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN), or have had one in the past, there may be additional support available for learning or reasonable adjustments. Please speak to your employer or training provider for more information.

Your training provider will also help to ensure any necessary reasonable adjustments are made for your end-point assessment (EPA). They will seek to reduce the effect of your disability or difficulty and ensure you are not at a disadvantage in the assessment situation.

Reasonable adjustments may involve:

- changing usual assessment arrangements, for example allowing you extra time to complete the assessment activity
- adapting assessment materials, such as providing materials in Braille
- providing assistance during assessment, such as a sign language interpreter or a reader

- re-organising the assessment room, such as removing visual stimuli
- changing the assessment method, for example from a written assessment to a spoken assessment
- using assistive technology, such as screen reading or voice-activated software
- providing the mechanism to have different colour backgrounds to screens for onscreen assessments or asking for permission for copying to different coloured paper for paper-based assessments
- providing and allowing different coloured transparencies with which to view assessment papers

I'M UNHAPPY WITH THE SERVICE FROM MY TRAINING PROVIDER, WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Discuss any concerns you have with your line manager. Where appropriate your line manager will support you to raise these concerns with the training provider. It should be possible to resolve most issues.

If you are making a formal complaint the training provider will require you to follow their complaints process which will be published on their website.

If after following the training provider's formal complaints process you are unhappy with the outcome you can raise a complaint to the Education Skills Funding Agency following the process on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).





HEALTH AND WELLBEING

I'M FEELING OVERWHELMED, WHAT CAN I DO?

Our daily lives can cause a lot of pressure and uncertainty both in and out of work. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed by your workload, your training or perhaps by commitments outside of work it's a good idea to discuss this with your line manager and / or your training provider. There may well be things they can do to support you, or they might be able to introduce some flexibilities to your apprenticeship that will help reduce the pressure to enable you to successfully continue. This could include considering flexibilities such as:

- reviewing your workload
- reviewing your training schedule
- a break in learning
- changing your working hours or considering part-time working.
- accessing additional help for example help with financial support or help with health issues

Further information about wellbeing and mindfulness is available on the [Amazing Apprenticeships](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk) website.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM UNWELL AND UNABLE TO WORK?

When you started your apprenticeship your employer and training provider should have explained what you need to do if you are unwell and unable to work. Your employer must offer you the same conditions as other employees working at similar grades or in similar roles which includes sick pay.

If you are unsure of the process, refer back to your apprenticeship agreement, your employment contract and any sickness policy issued by your employer.

I HAVE A DISABILITY OR HEALTH CONDITION WHICH IS MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO WORK, WHAT CAN I DO?

If you're disabled or have a physical condition that makes it hard for you to do your job, you can:

- talk to your employer about changes they must make in your workplace
- get extra help from [Access to Work](https://www.access-to-work.gov.uk)

Your employer must make certain changes (known as 'reasonable adjustments') to make sure you're not

substantially disadvantaged when doing your job. These could include changing your working hours or providing equipment to help you do your job.

You should talk to your employer about [reasonable adjustments](#) before you apply for Access to Work.

If the help you need at work is not covered by your employer making reasonable adjustments, you may be able to get help from Access to Work.

You'll be offered support based on your needs, which may include a grant to help cover the costs of practical support in the workplace.

An Access to Work grant can pay for:

- special equipment, adaptations or support worker services to help you do things like answer the phone or go to meetings
- help getting to and from work

You might not get a grant if you already get certain benefits.

The money does not have to be paid back and will not affect your other benefits.

WHAT MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE TO APPRENTICES?

If you are concerned about your mental health and wellbeing, you might want to discuss this with your line manager or your mentor. Your employer may be able to offer you support with your mental health through a health and wellbeing scheme. Where appropriate, your employer may also consider making some reasonable adjustments to support you.

You should also consider discussing this with your training provider who may also be able to offer you additional support.

If you're struggling with a mental health difficulties at work, you can access the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service for Apprentices. The Access to Work Mental Health Support Service for Apprentices delivered by Remploy, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, provides confidential support to help them remain in their apprenticeships. There is no charge to access the service.

Help is available if you:

- Are about to start or on an apprenticeship programme and finding it difficult to attend or concentrate due to a mental health condition
- Have been signed off sick with a mental health condition, (diagnosed/undiagnosed), but want to go back to your apprenticeship.

The specialist advisers provide:

- Emotional wellbeing support and advice for nine months
- Advice on simple workplace adjustments
- Successful coping strategies
- A step-by-step support plan.

Applications are subject to a decision by Access to Work advisers.

Get in touch today on 0300 456 8210 and speak to an adviser, or email apprentices@remploy.co.uk.

There are a range of other services you may consider contacting including:

- [NHS Every Mind Matters](#)
- [Mind](#) - Mind believe no-one should have to face a mental health problem alone. They'll listen, give you support and advice, and fight your corner.
- [Samaritans](#) - Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. They're there 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call 116 123 for free.

APPRENTICESHIP HELPLINE

If you have any other questions about support available which are not included in this document, you can contact the Apprenticeship Helpline:

nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk
Telephone: 0800 015 0400
8am to 10pm, 7 days a week
[Find out about call charges](#)

