

LINE MANAGER GUIDE TO APPRENTICESHIPS

INTRODUCTION

Line managers play an important role in apprentices' success and progress. This guide shares some hints, tips and considerations for the stages of the apprenticeship journey and for you as the line manager. You can use it as a complete resource or simply click through to the topics in the table of contents below where you are interested in further information.

This guide uses the term 'line manager' for consistency. However, different titles and terms are often used in business and industries, for example, supervisor, team leader, section leader or reporting manager. The target audience for this guide is the main person responsible for managing and supervising the day to day work of an apprentice.

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OVERVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship is a job with training and assessment, which enables apprentices to gain highly transferable skills and knowledge in a specific occupation. Apprentices have a contract of employment which is long enough to complete the apprenticeship successfully and ideally are employed for the long-term.

Perceptions of apprenticeships as entry-level and trade-based courses persist, yet this couldn't be further from today's reality. Apprenticeships have moved on from what they used to be and are an exciting option for both apprentice and employer.

Changes to funding, minimum requirements and the development of occupation-focused standards have driven up the quality of apprenticeships. You can now employ apprentices at all different levels, from school leavers to people of any age who want to further or change their careers.

Levels of apprenticeships:

Apprenticeships have the following equivalent educational levels:

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4, 5, 6, 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6, 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Off and on-the-job training:

The employer will select an approved training provider who will organise and deliver formal off-the-job training for the apprentice/s. Apprentices must spend at least 20% of their time on off-the-job training. However, they may need more than this, for example, if they need training in English and maths. It is up to the employer and training provider to decide how the off-the-job training is delivered.

The employer will provide apprentices with the opportunity to practise new skills in the work environment. This is called on-the-job training and helps an apprentice develop the specific skills for the workplace. Apprentices should be supported by a line manager and/or mentor.

More information about what counts as [off-the-job training](#) can be found on gov.uk.

End-point assessment:

Once the apprenticeship training is completed, an independent assessment will take place, called an 'end-point assessment'. The assessment is the apprentice's opportunity to demonstrate that they are fully competent in their occupation at the end of their training.

The apprentice can't achieve their apprenticeship without satisfying all the requirements listed in the apprenticeship standard, including the end-point assessment.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD LINE MANAGEMENT FOR APPRENTICES

Line managers play an important role in apprentices' success and progress. Apprentices may come from a range of backgrounds, some may have significant experience in the work place whilst for others this may be their first job. The apprentice line manager duties are the same as for all staff however they are also responsible for supporting apprentices to develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve their apprenticeship and become a fully competent member of the workforce.



WHO IS AN IDEAL LINE MANAGER FOR AN APPRENTICE?

- They should be experienced and competent in the apprentice's occupational field.
- They must be good communicators as they are best placed to talk to their apprentice, listen to their concerns, guide and coach them. They will check the apprentice is meeting their targets and ensure they are committed to the business, as well as help guide their learning in relation to the job role.
- They should be committed to the wellbeing of their direct reports and comfortable in encouraging an open and trusting relationship where support needs and/or flexibilities can be discussed. This may include making reasonable adjustments when needed.
- They must value the concepts of learning, development and progression in the workplace and understand, support and recognise opportunities for on- and off-the-job training.
- They will ensure that team members are briefed, understand the role of the apprentice and know what is expected of them in relation to apprentices.
- They are responsible for managing an apprentice's performance, including when under-performance occurs. Line managers will therefore need to be confident to handle those 'difficult conversations' and to carry out their role effectively. Apprentice managers should receive some training by their employer or a third party on:
 - how to conduct one-to-one meetings and deal with sensitive or emotive issue
 - how to coach individuals for success
 - how to manage discipline, capability and grievance procedures. Your company should have procedures in place to support these issues

LINE MANAGER GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

If you have been nominated or have chosen to be an apprentice line manager, what do you need to consider?

- If you have recruited a new apprentice straight out of education, they may have limited experience of what's expected of them going into their first paid job. Your support and clear direction to help them learn the ropes will be key.
- Apprentices may be doing lots of things for the first time, including receiving their first work phone calls, writing their first work email, sitting in their first work meeting. Help them to prepare and feel confident. For example, you may allow them to shadow you or someone else, you may need to train them and give them feedback in these situations.
- All apprentices will benefit from opportunities to network but may need some help to achieve this. Consider networking opportunities with other apprentices, wider colleagues and relevant industry or professional bodies.
- If your newly recruited apprentice is older and more experienced, they might not need as much help as the education-leaver, but they may still be unsure of what's expected of them.
- Have a read of the apprenticeship standard and become familiar with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that the training covers. The training provider or apprentice will be able to share a copy with you or you can search for it via the link, using a keyword from the apprenticeship title: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

- The apprentice will have an apprenticeship agreement and have a contract of employment for a duration suitable to complete the apprenticeship successfully. If you have a HR team, check if there are any other employment arrangements that you need to be aware of that might differ from other staff that you manage.
- At the start of the apprenticeship all three partners (employer, training provider and apprentice) will be required to agree and sign a commitment statement. This statement explains what everyone has to do to make sure the apprenticeship goes to plan. It outlines the responsibilities for each of you. If you are not the employer representative that signs it, make sure you have a copy. The commitment statement will cover:
 - What the training will consist of and a schedule of when and how it will happen
 - Details of what each partner is committing to deliver, including relevant employer responsibilities for on-the-job training and time for off-the-job learning
 - Who to contact and how to handle queries or resolve complaints

Being a line manager of someone joining your industry or organisation and learning how to be a competent and effective team member is rewarding and may even help you to improve and refine your own management skills. Use it as an opportunity to invest your knowledge and skills in helping to set someone on a great future career path.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AS A LINE MANAGER?

If you are recruiting or taking on the line management duties for an apprentice there are a number of activities to put in place to ensure that you are managing and supporting your apprentice as effectively as possible. The following section provides suggestions for actions you may wish to consider at the various stages of an apprenticeship once an apprentice has been recruited*. There is space to add your own notes and actions if this approach is useful.

*If you are a line manager also involved in the apprenticeship recruitment process, you may find this [further information](#) from gov.uk useful.

- [Guidance - how to take on an apprentice](#)
- Supporting individuals to choose the right apprenticeship - this guide sets out what employers should consider when designing and developing their apprenticeship programme, matching a suitable candidate and providing ongoing support

PREPARING - ahead of the apprenticeship start

For a **new apprentice** recruit:

- before an apprentice starts you should consider sending them a starter pack / e-mail or arranging a call so that they know what to expect from their first day. This might include:
 - a list of what you would like them to bring – notebook / pens / ID, etc
 - what time you would like them to arrive and who to ask for
 - how they should dress
 - any arrangements/options for lunch etc
 - where to get the bus/train or park their car
 - plan an induction and onboarding programme. If your organisation has a standard induction, are there are additional elements required for your apprentice
- check if they have any questions or concerns about any details in their contract, e.g. when they will be paid, working hours etc.
- encourage an apprentice to be open and share information about any support needs or flexibilities that they would find helpful or any reasonable adjustments they may need and make necessary arrangements.
- there will be a 'sign up or start' process with the apprentice and training provider that you are likely to be involved in. This could be when the commitment statement is drawn up and agreed. Take the opportunity to find out all the information you need to about the programme, reviews, who to contact if you have concerns or queries

For an **existing member of the team doing an apprenticeship**:

- review the apprenticeship standard with your staff member
- talk with your apprentice ahead of the programme start about how work plans could be adjusted and allowing time for off-the-job learning
- there will be a 'sign up or start' process with the apprentice and training provider that you are likely to be involved in. This could be when the commitment statement is drawn up and agreed. Take the opportunity to find out all the information you need to about the programme, reviews, who to contact if you have concerns or queries

Notes / actions:

INDUCTION & EARLY DAYS – supporting a good start to the apprenticeship

For a **new apprentice** recruit:

- introduce your apprentice to team members and describe their roles and the function of relevant teams. An organisational chart might be useful
- arrange one-to-one meetings for the apprentice and key team members so they can understand how their role fits within the wider organisation
- talk through company policies, rather than just ask them to read them. Discuss these openly so you are confident they have understood what's required. Remember, there's lots of language in the workplace that takes time to learn and you will need to support this
- explain to your apprentice openly about day to day duties and what your workplace considers to be suitable behaviour, e.g. the use of mobile phones, appropriate use of language, and time keeping
- actively engage with and participate in induction activities arranged by the training provider.
- put in place regular one-to-one meetings for you and your apprentice and explain what these are for. These meetings should be used to assess your apprentice's performance, agree future tasks, and share feedback with each other
- develop and agree clear objectives for your apprentice, just as you would any other member of staff. This will help the apprentice understand their role, what is expected of them and guide their development
- consider identifying a buddy or mentor for your apprentice (particularly if they are new to work). This allows you to concentrate on performance and helping them meet what's required. The buddy or mentor (who could be a more experienced apprentice) can be approached with more informal or day to day questions or concerns
- remember that your apprentice is with you learning how to do a job. You may sometimes need to give firm guidance, but it is also important you to tell your apprentice when they're doing well

For an **existing member of the team doing an apprenticeship**:

- identify any work commitments that clash with scheduled apprenticeship training and support your apprentice to make any changes needed
- actively engage with and participate in induction activities arranged by the training provider
- add clear objectives relating to the apprenticeship programme to existing performance objectives for your staff member. This will help them feel supported and ensure that the apprenticeship programme is a recognised element of their job role and development
- consider whether additional one-to-ones or informal catch ups following training sessions would be useful and add them to diaries
- have an honest conversation about any concerns your apprentice/staff member may have about balancing the commitments of work and study or their skills to study. Ask what they need from you as a line manager

Notes / actions:

ONGOING & MONITORING - during the apprenticeship

For all apprentices:

- There are a number of approaches that you could take, and they will be determined by the type of business, size of organisation/team, needs of your apprentice. You could consider:
- setting up a weekly catch-up/kit with your apprentice to ensure you are proactively supporting them
- assigning a member of staff to be their workplace buddy and/or a mentor
- making sure that they have contact with other apprentices in the workplace (if available) as this may help with understanding how to complete learning for example
- scheduling regular updates with your training provider – these should happen as a minimum on a quarterly basis and should review:
 - how on and off the job training is going, are all parties working to the agreed plan and quality standards
 - any challenges identified and/or successes and achievements
 - are any support measures or adjustments in place working as expected or need to be introduced?
- working with your apprentice to review progress and update objectives, goals and plan work activities or projects as time goes on
- ensuring you understand what is being taught by the training provider and look for ways within the workplace to complement the knowledge, skills and behaviours, e.g. involve them in meetings or tasks that would reinforce their new knowledge
- encouraging and supporting your apprentice to try new approaches and be open to changing or testing new ways to do things.
- identifying and encouraging networking opportunities with other apprentices and others within the professional community which may be beneficial to their development
- making time for their formal appraisal and working with the apprentice to write their self-appraisal. Remember this could be their first time so, help them to understand the process and purpose
- making sure you work with your apprentice to identify areas they might struggle with and build in extra support or training to help them
- if your organisation has a centralised function which procures, oversees and manages the relationships with training organisations keep in regular contact with them to update on progress and raise any issues.

Notes / actions:

TOWARDS THE END – reaching apprenticeship completion

For all apprentices:

- ask the training provider or end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) to give you an overview of the end-point assessment (EPA) and its requirements. This should happen early on in the apprenticeship and continue throughout so that apprentices are prepared. Depending on the assessment methods you may even need to be present or contribute in some way
- you will need to agree and ‘sign off’ that the apprentice is ready for final assessments (known as the Gateway), it’s important that you understand the requirements for this
- the EPAO is likely to make contact with you to share information, to agree dates for assessment and ask you to make necessary arrangements (on behalf of the employer) e.g. book a quiet space, make visitor arrangements for an assessor visit. If your apprentice has additional support needs or requires reasonable adjustments, discuss this with the EPAO. Further guidance on EPA adjustments is available from the [Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education](#).
- help your apprentice to prepare for their EPA activities, for example, if they have to give a presentation, arrange opportunities for them to practice
- make contact with the wider network about any opportunities there might be for the apprentice after completing if they are not remaining in a role in your team
- when your apprentice succeeds and achieves – you should feel like you have achieved too! Do something celebratory within your team/department to share the achievement
- if your apprentice doesn’t achieve all of the EPA components first time round, work with them to support their confidence and preparation for any resits or retakes
- help your apprentice with relevant advice or support regarding next steps. This may relate to new responsibilities if staying in post, careers guidance and planning, CPD opportunities, or help with internal application processes or interview practice

Notes / actions:

MANAGING APPRENTICE PERFORMANCE

As with all employees, managing an apprentice's performance is a continuous process. It involves making sure that their performance contributes to the goals of their teams, the business as a whole, as well as the apprenticeship standard they're working towards demonstrating competence against. Work towards giving your apprentice/s valuable work to do, build the trust and aim to avoid micromanagement.

Good performance management helps an apprentice know:

- what the business is trying to achieve
- their role in helping the business achieve its goals
- the skills and knowledge they need to fulfil their role
- the standards of performance required
- how they can develop their performance and contribute to the development of the organisation
- how they are doing, both in their learning and work objectives
- when there are performance problems and what to do about them.

Managing performance is crucial to the **relationship between a manager and their apprentice**. It can be a key element of good communication and foster the growth of trust and personal development. Managing performance is central to how well your apprentice will be engaged in their work and how well they will perform.

You will be able to tell if your apprentice is engaged if they:

- take pride in their job and show loyalty towards their line manager, team or organisation
- go the extra mile – particularly in areas where the apprentice needs to be creative, responsive or adaptable
- look for ways to embed their new learning or try new things

Apprentices must be able to **understand their objectives** and know what they need to do in order to achieve them, so it is advised that these are set through a discussion with the apprentice in the first instance. It's important to remember that objectives should be realistic but stretching.

If you have more than one apprentice undertaking similar tasks, it might make sense to set some common objectives, but this should still be done in discussion with each apprentice.

Many organisations will have their own structure,

process and forms to complete to support a performance development cycle. Typically, there are three elements:

1. One-to-one regular informal meetings where line managers discuss current work and development. They offer feedback to recognise and celebrate successes and achievements, and to encourage progress and identify any possible problems. It is recommended that these are no less frequent than once a month for an apprentice and many find weekly one-to-ones in the early days are useful.
2. Formal interim reviews where the line manager sits down with the apprentice to discuss progress against their objectives. This is an opportunity for the line manager to celebrate achievements and offer constructive feedback where more needs to be done. It may be helpful to align these with the reviews that the training provider will need to complete with you both.
3. The annual appraisal review where the work of the year is discussed, formally recorded and feedback is given.

During the course of the year the need for new tasks may arise and priorities may change. Any changes should be recorded, and the training provider should be informed.

It is likely that line managers will need to **deal with challenges** with any employee, however, for some apprentices this could be their first job working in a chosen industry and occasionally, and for a variety of reasons, apprentices may decide the job, apprenticeship or industry is not right for them. Tackle this situation as soon as possible and make sure that you explore and understand any concerns to see if there is anything that can be done to help the apprentice to continue. The training provider will be keen to also get involved and see if there are suitable resolutions. Check if the right support is in place and whether there are options for further support and flexibilities to be introduced, e.g. a move to a different part of the business, a change in working hours or part-time hours, a break in learning. Encourage the apprentice to speak to other team members 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 for the apprentice via your training provider or the [National Careers Service](https://www.nationalcareersservice.gov.uk/) to allow the apprentice to explore their thinking in detail with an independent advisor.

Under-performance is also a necessary part of line management however, this can often be uncomfortable for both the manager and the apprentice. Regular one-to-one reviews and support will help minimise under-performance. Nevertheless, there may be occasions when, despite adequate support, an apprentice's

performance consistently fails to reach the required standard. Where you identify this is the case, you must not duck the issue. Line managers must be prepared and ready to have **difficult conversations** with their apprentice as they would with their other staff, and will ideally need to be trained to do so.

It is important to discuss any problems carefully with an apprentice so that practical solutions can be agreed. There are published support guides available for apprentices that may be helpful, and the training provider should also be keen to get involved and support.

If informal approaches fail you may decide to take more

formal action which could eventually result in an apprentice's dismissal if an apprentice fails to make the necessary improvement, but this should be a last resort. Where this is the case always follow your organisation's disciplinary procedure. If your company does not have a disciplinary procedure in place, regardless of your size or legal constitution, it is advised that you put one in place as a priority. This will help safeguard both you and the apprentice should disciplinary action be required.

If an organisation does not have the expertise, there are a number of external providers who can assist with this. For further information see the [Acas](https://www.acas.gov.uk) website.





APPRENTICE MENTAL HEALTH

Knowing how to best approach and talk to a team member who may be experiencing mental ill health may seem difficult, and it can seem easier to avoid the matter. However, it is much better to try to resolve concerns at an early stage and nip issues in the bud before they can escalate or worsen.

A line manager who believes an apprentice may be experiencing mental ill health should take the lead and arrange a meeting as soon as possible to talk to them in private. The conversation should be approached in a positive and supportive way.

Managers should be aware of what additional support the organisation could offer staff experiencing mental ill health and how to signpost them to it. Further services could include:

- mental health champions or advocates within the organisation
- Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme funded by the organisation.
- Other national or local support, such as:
- [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.
- You should also consider discussing this, or encouraging your apprentice to discuss with the

training provider who may also be able to offer the apprentice additional support.

If your apprentice is struggling with a mental health condition such as anxiety, depression and low mood they can access a free service run by trained mental health professionals. There is no charge for the Access to Work Mental Health Support Service for Apprentices, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions.

They should contact the service if they are:

- In an apprenticeship (attending or signed off sick)
- Have a mental health condition that has resulted in absence or is causing difficulties for them to remain in the apprenticeship.

Mental health experts will help via:

- Emotional wellbeing advice and guidance for nine months
- Ways to cope, so that they can focus on their apprenticeship
- A support plan to keep them on track
- Advice on workplace adjustments
- Helping you as the employer understand how you can best support them if they have a mental health condition.

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

For more information, help and support, apprentices can contact:

E-mail: apprentices@remploy.co.uk Tel: 0300 456 8210



SUPPORT FOR LINE MANAGERS

If you need advice and support then you may first look internally to your own colleagues, your line manager or an HR or Learning & Development colleague if you have one.

The training provider will also help with any aspect that relates to the apprentice and their training programme. For example, your apprentice may choose to declare a learning difficulty or personal barrier of some kind. If the apprentice gives you permission you may wish to discuss this with the training provider who will have supported other apprentices in all sorts of organisations and may be able to share ideas, solutions or resources that will help.

Your continuous professional development is equally as important, you should feel confident in your own knowledge and skills to effectively support the apprentice on their journey. Through your own performance and development management don't forget to identify any training needs you might have and talk to your own line manager about these.

Remember to be kind to yourself: being a line manager doesn't mean you have to be all-knowing. There might be people in your team/organisation that have more knowledge and expertise in an area than you. Help your apprentice understand who else might be better placed to advise or deal with a specific query.

OTHER USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There is lots of useful information available about apprenticeships. A few relevant links are below:

Learning and Work Institute has designed a toolkit for employers who want to make their apprenticeship programme more accessible and inclusive. The toolkit provides practical information, support and case studies to help employers to do this. The employer toolkit can be found at: employer-toolkit.org.uk.

Apprentice Support Guide – this guide provides apprentices with information on the range of support they can access during their apprenticeship. See apprenticeships.gov.uk.

[Acas](https://www.acas.org.uk), the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service - working with millions of employers and employees every year to improve workplace relationships

Employer Information on Funding - <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employer/how-much-is-it-going-to-cost>