

INFORM

Briefing

#116

Why apprenticeships make sense

— November 2018

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Introduction – what is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a route to developing skills and competencies, catering for people from different backgrounds, experiences and levels of achievement. Originally catering for young people (in the main), apprenticeships now provide a practical learning pathway, as well as a means to achieving higher levels of education and a successful career in specialisms such as IT. This briefing sets out the opportunities created by apprenticeship schemes, the scope of apprenticeship schemes across the UK, some of the support available and three leading examples from councils that are focused on driving up IT skills.

What are the opportunities?

It was six long years ago that the vision for the apprenticeship reforms in England was set, following a government review called the Richards Review. The aim was to give employers control of designing apprenticeships to ensure that they genuinely met their needs.

Just 12 months ago the apprenticeship levy was introduced for all employers with a pay bill of over £3m, including those in the public sector. The government's ambition was to increase the poor levels of productivity seen in the UK and stimulate employer investment in skills. To put this into context, the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) found recently that the UK ranks 23rd out of the 28 countries in Europe, in terms of investment in professional development.

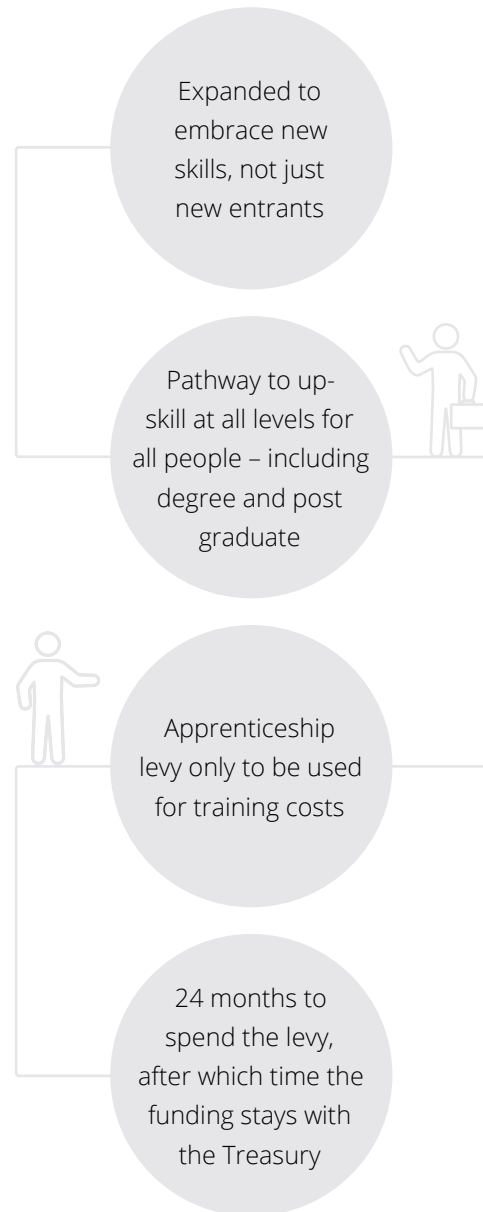
The targets set are as follows:

To create three million apprenticeship starts by 2020

In the public sector, 23 starts for every 1,000 employees (2.3% of headcount) for all organisations with 250-plus staff

According to the government report 'Digital Skills for the UK Economy', demand for technical specialists is set to increase both inside and outside technical industries, and by 2024 it is predicted that there will be 0.7 million tech specialists working within technology companies across the UK and 0.8 million in other businesses.

Apprenticeship programmes have changed:



The 'apprenticeship community', made up of government, employers and educators, has voiced a shared opinion: more needs to be done to engage teachers, parents and young people on a digital IT career.

Why would I bother with apprenticeships?

Research shows that 89% of digital employers reported that an apprenticeship helped improve their product or service, with a further 50% of digital businesses reporting that digital apprenticeships helped tackle skill shortages.

Attracting digitally savvy employees and developing a high-quality learning environment helps to develop a culture based around innovation, diversity and talent. Apprenticeships can be the springboard for every council in the UK to create a digital skills development programme for new apprentices, whilst enhancing the career paths within their existing workforce.

What is the apprenticeship levy and how can I spend it?

The government is offering more significant support to employers willing to consider taking on 16-18 year olds and students from more disadvantaged areas, or for care leavers and those with education and healthcare plans. However, there are no longer any age restrictions for apprenticeships, which means that you could spend your levy on upskilling or reskilling current staff.

This year, levy paying employers will also be able to transfer 10% of their levy funding to employers in their supply chain should they wish to. Employers in the tech sector such as Microsoft are already doing this to ensure that the suppliers they use also have the most highly qualified staff.

What is being done? Guidance, initiatives and standards

Department for Education

Guidance: bit.ly/2Pr7kYe

Degree apprenticeships

The GOV.UK website references a comprehensive guide to higher and degree apprenticeships; visit the website here bit.ly/2FjsQti

Develop the workforce

For businesses, degree apprenticeships are a highly affordable way to invest in people, attract new talent, upskill staff, improve retention and boost innovation and productivity. For individuals, they are a flexible, tuition-fee-free opportunity to gain a degree-level qualification while earning a salary.

Degree apprenticeships are ideal for companies looking to develop skills and for individuals who want a degree with on-the-job training without the debt. They're offered by registered training providers, like the University of Hertfordshire, and are designed by employers for employers.

Benefits to your company

Degree apprenticeships are an excellent way to:

- Attract new talent, particularly ambitious school and college leavers who want to learn while they earn
- Upskill existing employees and extend their capabilities
- Develop a highly effective and dedicated workforce
- Immediately apply new ideas and innovation
- Demonstrate commitment to training, which improves productivity, staff retention and morale.

Apprentices with prior relevant qualifications or work experience can also top-up by going into the second or third year of a degree apprenticeship programme subject

to meeting the university's entry criteria.

The University of Hertfordshire

A leading provider of degree apprenticeships, the University of Hertfordshire introduced these in 2015. Degree apprenticeships are a means of training and developing new and existing employees in an organisation. Working in partnership with employers, high quality degree apprenticeship programmes are delivered that meet the needs of the specific business and staff.

The University of Hertfordshire has experience of delivering degree apprenticeships through a combination of teaching and learning techniques, including online, face-to-face, work-based projects, coaching and action-learning sets. Each apprenticeship programme is designed to develop practical skills and industry knowledge, alongside the professional behaviours required for the occupation standard.

The apprenticeships have been created by employers, for employers to support workforce development and ensure success. They combine the best of both worlds: the academic depth and discipline of a degree with the immediate vocational relevance of an apprenticeship. The programmes currently available include; digital, education, health, engineering, law and leadership and management.

BCS Digital IT Apprenticeship Standards

The [BCS Digital IT Apprenticeship](#) Standards (approved by the Department for Education (DfE)) have been developed by employers from over 200 organisations, to cover major entry level roles into tech and digital careers. These standards provide a robust quality programme of study, practical skills and competence.

Devolved nations

Apprenticeships are a devolved policy. This means that authorities in each of the UK nations manage their own apprenticeship programmes, including how funding is spent on apprenticeship training.

The programme in Scotland features foundation, modern and graduate apprenticeships.

Details can be found here: bit.ly/2DEyLY

The Welsh scheme covers four levels: foundation apprenticeship, apprenticeships, higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships.

Details can be found here: bit.ly/2zTOWwr

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are offered at levels 2, 3 and higher (levels 4 and 5). Details can be found here: bit.ly/2B5EgMV

City & Guilds

At City & Guilds, work is being done with employers and training providers to train young people through traineeships, supporting people with digital literacy and increasing the skills of new starters and current employees through apprenticeships for digital skills for ICT professionals. These are the skills needed to work across diverse industries for digitally innovative and creative individuals and organisations.

City & Guilds provides a wide range of apprenticeships across a number of industries. For further information on apprenticeships, visit bit.ly/2Q4SrdH

City & Guilds is also an End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), for businesses/ organisations looking for an EPAO for the new apprenticeship standards. Further information is available here bit.ly/2OIBj8t

LGA support offer 2018

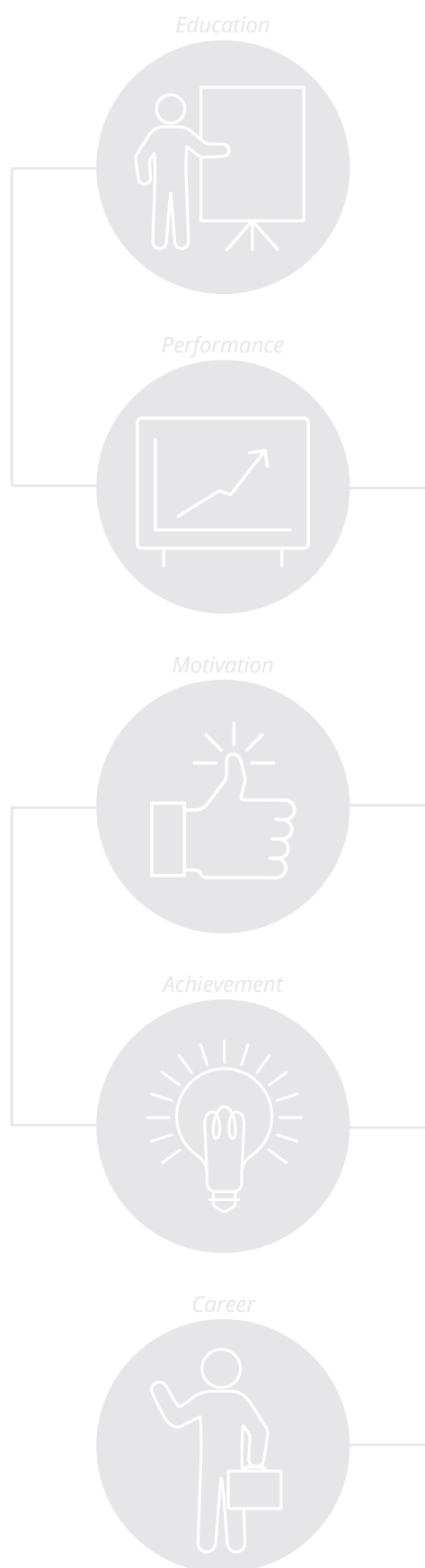
In England, the Local Government Association (LGA) has provided the following support and initiatives in order to progress the requirements:

- Knowledge Hub – online community
- Regional/sub regional network support
- Guidance and sharing best practice – workshops, plus other dissemination events/webinars
- Procurement guide and standards guide
- Support funding for standards development
- Improvement support – self assessment ‘maturity model approach’
 - ‘Peer to peer’ support
 - direct on-site support

In recognition of the fact that there is a need to create digital apprenticeships in the public sector, and to focus on the ‘hard to recruit jobs’ and where there may be specific skills gaps, the LGA is specifically considering and facilitating the following:

- Mapping roles to the new digital apprenticeship standards
- Specific apprenticeship programme linked to specific skills gaps
- Local government apprentices digital personal learning network (PLN).

There is also opportunity to upskill the existing workforce to the meet new digital standards.



What are councils doing?

Case studies:

Hackney Council

The council has launched a new programme of digital skills opportunities that will enable Hackney residents to develop their digital skills and careers.

As well as achieving some of the most successful educational outcomes nationally and an award-winning council apprenticeship programme, Hackney is fortunate to have a vibrant and growing digital economy, with sector leading start-ups and global companies choosing the borough as their base. The council is keen to work with these other local employers to shape its programme.

This is an important part of the council's strategic approach for its ICT and digital service. Investing in the apprenticeship programme will help to ensure that there is a sustainable workforce and will enable the growth of skills needed to deliver the council's ambitious plans.

As part of its ongoing investment in its in-house ICT and digital delivery capability, Hackney is aiming to significantly expand the apprenticeship and pre-employment opportunities that it offers. Earlier this year the council offered 18 IT and digital apprenticeships across a range of roles, including applications management, data analysis and ICT support.

This is part of a wider programme of work that also includes additional paid work experience and traineeship placements.

Feedback from the Hackney Digital Apprenticeship employer event indicates that organisers of the scheme would want participants to be well prepared to benefit from career opportunities with other digital employers, after having participated in the Hackney offering.

It is important to ensure that apprentices have the opportunity to learn the softer skills needed to succeed in a work environment so that they are

confident when applying for future roles. Another vital ingredient is to ensure that, as well as earning their qualification, apprentices are given the opportunity to deliver specific projects and outcomes, so that they can build their personal portfolios and marketing skills. It would be valuable to consider how apprentices can be supported to develop their understanding of the job market so that they are able to use that to inform their future career planning. This might be helped if mentoring opportunities can be identified during the apprenticeships.

Maximising the benefits that participants get from the programme is critical to the success of the scheme. Strong pastoral support, especially in the first few months of an apprenticeship, was felt to be very important. There are also benefits from making sure that there is consistency in the baseline level of skills and experience across the cohort of apprentices before they start.

Some of the businesses attending expressed an interest in further follow-up to explore opportunities to work together with the council. There was also an appetite for setting up a digital collaboration space to help continue the conversation, share experience and identify future opportunities to collaborate.

“Earlier this year the council offered 18 IT and digital apprenticeships across a range of roles”

Aberdeenshire Council

Aberdeenshire has successfully been running apprenticeship programmes for the last four to five years. These fall into two main categories, with a third model currently being tested. There is no guarantee of a permanent position being offered to the participant at the end of any of the programmes:

- Modern apprenticeship – this is a paid programme offered to 16 to 20-year-olds to enable them to complete their SVQ qualification, over an 18 to 24-month period. The programme is a combination of study via a college course and a work placement for targeted roles in the service, including customer, tech and application support. The network solutions team is also going to be offered as an option. Additionally, there is the opportunity to complete the ITIL foundation certificate. Two or three placements are available on an annual basis.
- Graduate level apprenticeship (GLA) – this is also a paid programme and is the first one of its type in Scotland. It is in year two of being available in conjunction with Robert Gordon's University. The courses deliver a degree level qualification for an IT specialisation over a four-year period, with a focus on software development. Minimal time is spent at the university, as the emphasis is more work-based learning and the study/assessment (coding language used) is determined by the requirements of the employer (the council). The assessments and modules are standard for all students on the course.
- Foundation apprenticeship – this is in the first year of delivery and is not a paid programme. It is being offered in the last two years of secondary school (years S5 and S6) where a day a week is spent at college in year S5 and a day a week in the workplace in year S6; all as part of the regular school timetable.



“Aberdeenshire has successfully been running apprenticeship programmes for the last four to five years”

Enfield Council

Apprenticeships have been running for a number of years via a corporate programme. The following specific technology-related apprenticeships are either being undertaken or being planned:

- Infrastructure technician level 3
- IT, software, web and telecoms level 4
- Associate project manager level 4

The apprenticeship levy has enabled the council to achieve the following:

- Upskilling of existing staff
- Training budget savings
- 'Grow our own' in hard-to-fill services
- Potential staff retention
- Staff promotion

Moving forwards, the emphasis for the council will be to target 50% new apprentices with a focus on vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities and from areas of deprivation; 40% on upskilling the current workforce in priority areas; and 10% for professional qualifications as a staff retention tool not covered by priority areas.



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Acknowledgements

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