

## Technical Education Programme

### ‘Update on Apprenticeships’ webinar (11/02/26) – Q&A

*Many thanks to colleagues from the Department for Education (DfE), Costa Coffee and the Gatsby Foundation for their input to the answers below.*

*Disclaimer: Please note that the information in this document reflects the policy situation at the time of the webinar recorded in February 2026 and is subject to change over time.*

#### **Q: What are the Foundation Apprenticeships and what are the entry requirements?**

A: Foundation Apprenticeships are available for young people aged 16-21 (and up to 24 for those who have an Education & Health Care Plan), care leavers or prisoners/prison leavers. They are targeted at those not currently engaging with apprenticeships.

Foundation apprenticeships are jobs with training aligned to an entry level occupation and include substantive on and off-the-job learning, with a typical duration of 8 months.

Young people aged 16-18 who do not hold a level 1 or level 2 English and Maths qualification will be required to study towards the relevant qualification; however, there is no requirement to pass in order to achieve their foundation apprenticeship.

The first seven foundation apprenticeships that became available in August 2025 are building services engineering; finishing trades; onsite trades (i.e. carpentry, plastering and brickwork); hardware, network and infrastructure; software and data; engineering and manufacturing; and health and social care.

#### **Q: What are accessible apprenticeships?**

A: An accessible apprenticeship is a flexible, bespoke programme designed to support students with additional learning needs and disabilities. They provide reasonable adjustments to remove barriers, e.g. by making changes to the recruitment process, working environment, or training programme to ensure students with additional needs are not disadvantaged.

**Q: Will students who have completed a T Level be able to ‘fast track’ an apprenticeship, through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?**

A: Work is underway to increase awareness in areas where this would be especially valuable. For example, this has begun in Engineering and Construction, where Skills England has determined an accelerated apprenticeship to be a useful outcome on completion of a T Level. Gatsby are currently working with employers and providers to develop accelerated apprenticeships in these routes. This work involves mapping T Level content to in-demand apprenticeships (as defined by employers) to aid with RPL, and helping providers create appropriate programmes for cohorts of T Level graduates.

The DfE encourage all providers and employers offering an apprenticeship to a student who has completed a T Level in a relevant occupation to work together to identify opportunities for acceleration based on what the student will have already covered in their T Level.

**Q: What is the new pilot apprenticeship matching service and how will it work?**

A: Announced in February 2026, a new ‘university clearing style’ system will redirect ‘near miss’ applicants who don’t secure their top choice apprenticeship to similar opportunities in their area. This is due to be rolled out later in 2026, alongside a new online platform, to give young people clear, accessible information about apprenticeships and careers outcomes. It will be delivered in partnership with Mayoral Strategic Authorities who know their skills needs best. For more information, see [here](#).

**Q: How do we invite members of the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN) into school/college?**

A: The [Apprenticeship Ambassador Network \(AAN\)](#) is made up of employers and current and former apprentices, who aim to inspire and motivate the apprentices of tomorrow. You can contact the AAN through your nearest [Regional Network](#) or [Contact your local Careers Hub | The Careers and Enterprise Company](#)

**Q: What apprenticeship opportunities are available at Costa Coffee and how do young people apply?**

A: The [Costa Careers](#) website is the place to search and apply for job opportunities, including apprenticeships. In the UK, there are currently over 70 apprentices working across a range of standards, including Leadership, Finance, HR, Coaching, Data, Digital and Change Management.

All employees, regardless of entry level, have the opportunity to take part in an internal staff training and development programme.

**Q: Do Costa Coffee offer apprenticeships for young people with SEND?**

A: There is a current pilot project underway with a special needs school in Kent to explore how Costa can further support young people with SEND. This has included providing supported work experience opportunities, with a view to developing future training programmes and Costa is also trialling supported internships. As a large number of Costa employees are under the age of 25, the company is keen to explore additional steps that can be taken to ensure an inclusive environment for all.

**Q: Is Costa Coffee a 'Disability Confident' employer?**

A: Costa is currently disability committed and their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team are working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Costa strive to support all employees and to make reasonable adjustments for those with additional needs, as required.

**Q: What is the best way to contact Costa Coffee to invite them to a careers fair?**

A: The best way is to make contact with your local store or [contact via email](#). The key email address for general contact is [peoplehub@costacoffee.com](mailto:peoplehub@costacoffee.com)