

Understanding the recent changes to apprenticeships

Key things careers professionals need to know

Apprenticeships are evolving, creating new pathways and more flexibility for the young people you support. Below is an overview of the key changes you need to know about.

Responsibility for apprenticeships has moved from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions, ensuring that policies around youth employment can be more closely aligned.

Responsibility for careers education and young people remains with the Department for Education.



Department
for Education



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Key policy changes

Apprenticeship duration

Apprenticeships can now be shorter, with a minimum duration of 8 months instead of 12 months for foundation apprenticeships or for apprentices with significant prior experience. This makes programmes more accessible and easier for employers to tailor around business needs.

Financial support

- The Care Leavers' Bursary has risen from £1,000 to £3,000, offering vital help for eligible young people aged 16–24 years old.
- A new targeted bursary worth up to £4,500 per year per household will be introduced to support eligible families on Universal Credit when a young person (16–18) starts an apprenticeship (further details to follow from the Government).

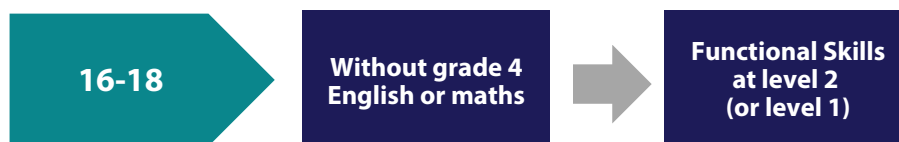
Apprenticeship assessment

Apprentices can now be assessed throughout their programme, not just at the end, with employers verifying workplace behaviours as part of the process. This allows more flexibility for providers and eases the burden for apprentices.

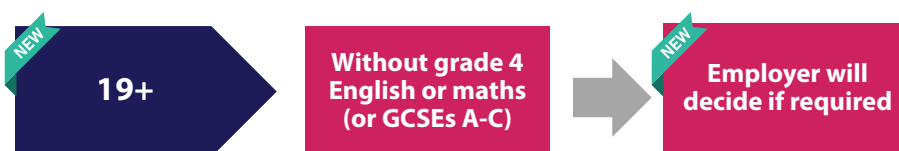
English and maths

English and maths requirements have changed.

- 16–18 year olds without GCSE English or maths at grade 4 or above will continue to be supported to achieve Functional Skills at level 2, or level 1 where needed.



- For adults aged 19+, employers now decide whether English and maths qualifications are required during the programme, potentially opening doors for individuals previously held back by entry criteria.



Understanding the recent changes to apprenticeships

Key things careers professionals need to know

New routes for young people

Foundation apprenticeships

Foundation apprenticeships are designed for 16–21 year olds, and those aged 22–24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), care leavers and prison leavers. They offer structured entry routes into a variety of sectors for individuals who need additional support to progress to a full apprenticeship. Foundation apprenticeships have recently been expanded to now include retail and hospitality.

Key facts

Level 2 programme

8 months

16-21 year olds
+
22-24 years
EHCP, care leaver or
prison leaver

Current subjects

Building Service
Engineering

Engineering &
Manufacturing

Finishing
trades

Onsite
trades

Hardware, network &
infrastructure

Software & data

Health &
social care

New subjects

NEW
Retail service, supply
and administration

NEW
Catering and hospitality

Foundation apprenticeships also carry a £2,000 employer incentive, making it easier and more affordable for employers to offer supported, confidence-building first steps into work.

New level 2 apprenticeship

A new Administrative assistant apprenticeship has been introduced. This level 2 programme is exclusively for 16–24 year olds, offering another accessible starting point.

Supporting those already in work

Apprenticeship units

Apprenticeship Units, introduced in 2026, provide short, targeted training for people aged 19+ who are already employed and not currently on an apprenticeship.

AI strategy & opportunity

AI adoption, procurement &
governance

AI delivery & organisational
transformation

Battery manufacturing

Solar PV installation &
maintenance

NEW

**Apprenticeship
Units**

Aged 19+

Employed

**30 - 140
hours**

1 - 16 weeks

Electric vehicle (EV) charging point
installation and maintenance

Electrical fitting & assembly

Welding (mechanised)

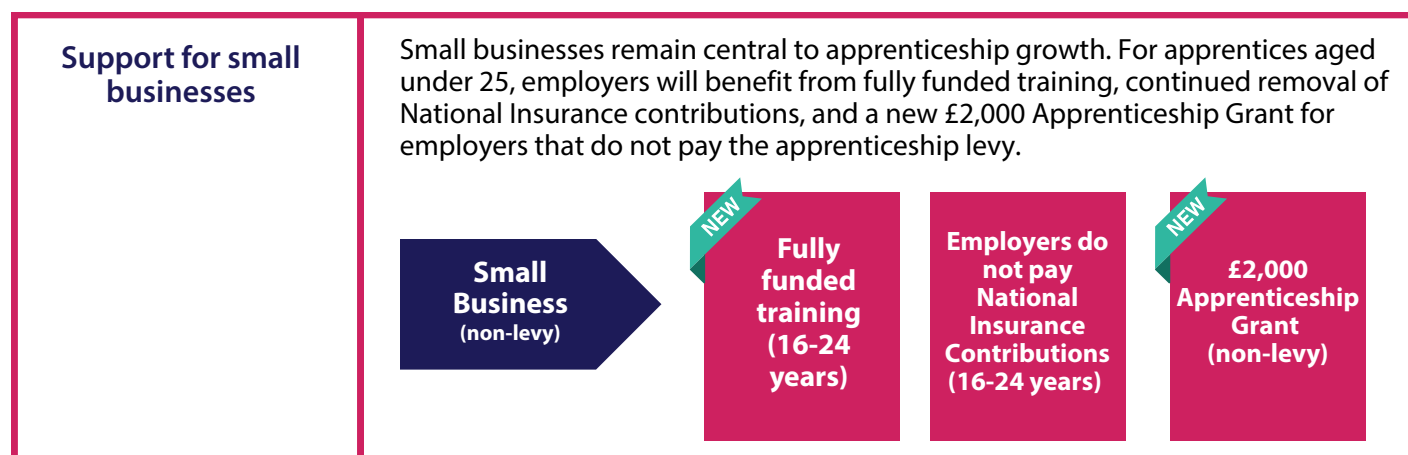
Mechanical fitting & assembly

Permanent modular building
assembly

Understanding the recent changes to apprenticeships

Key things careers professionals need to know

The role of small businesses



Streamlining apprenticeship standards

Streamlining apprenticeship standards	With nearly 700 apprenticeship standards available, the system is being streamlined. The standards below are being defunded to reduce duplication and free up budget and will not be available for new starts from September 2026. - Chartered manager degree apprenticeship (level 6) - Cleaning hygiene operative (level 2) - Coaching professional (level 5) - Custody and detention professional (level 3) - Facilities management supervisor (level 3) - Improvement leader (level 6) - Improvement practitioner (level 4) - Learning and skills assessor (level 3) - Learning and skills mentor (level 4) - Lead practitioner in adult care (level 4) - Operations departmental manager (level 5) - Outdoor learning specialist (level 5) - Professional security operative (level 2) - Public sector compliance investigator and officer (level 3) - Security first line manager (level 3) - Team leader supervisor (level 3)
--	---

The Youth Guarantee

Youth Guarantee incentives	The Youth Guarantee introduces new incentives to support young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). These include a £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant for hiring 18–24 year olds who have been on Universal Credit for over six months and an expanded Jobs Guarantee covering 25 hours of wages per week for six months for those aged 18-24 on Universal Credit for over 18 months. NEW £3,000 Youth Jobs Grant 18-24 years Universal Credit 6 months + NEW Jobs Guarantee 18-24 years Universal Credit 18 months 25 hours⁺ per week 6 months
-----------------------------------	---