

How to set up a

# Successful Tech Apprenticeship

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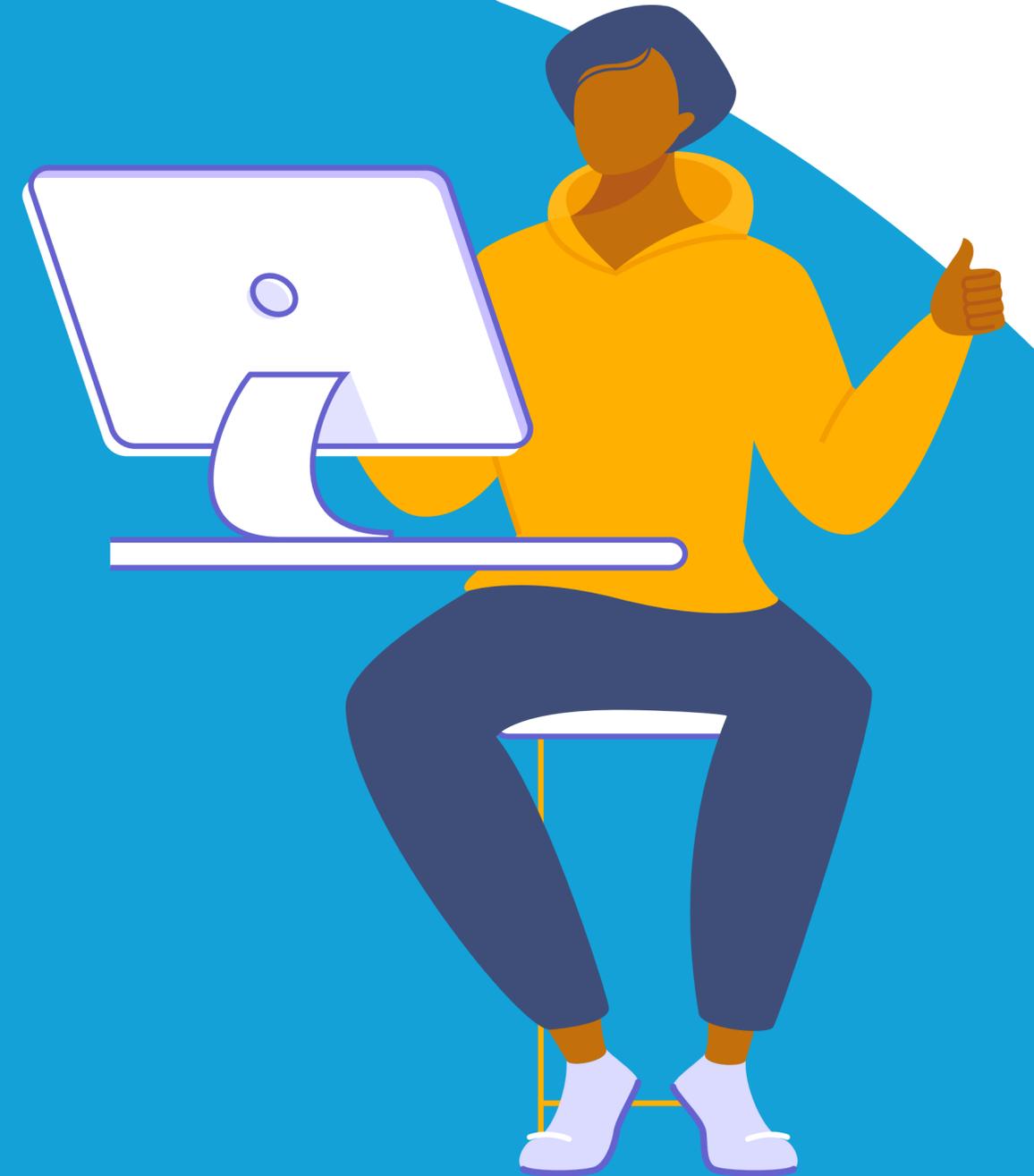
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# Building a business case



**Diversity of hiring, building future talent pipelines, resolving the lack of talent in tech and providing opportunities to those who would normally not be considered for a role outside an apprenticeship.**

**All of these are hard to reject particularly in tech but you should still need to provide data to demonstrate a strong business case.**



# There is evidence that employing and training apprentices can improve the productivity of companies, with recent research demonstrating both short and long-term gains.

A research study carried out for the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) found that, on average, each apprentice brings a gain in productivity of more than £10,000 per year for their employer, with figures for some sectors being even higher.

As well as boosting productivity, apprenticeships can also help companies to compete in the modern marketplace. In industry research, 77 per cent of employers agreed that taking on apprentices helped to make their organisations more competitive. Another finding was that more than 8 out of 10 customers prefer to buy from companies which employ apprentices.

An underlying benefit of an apprenticeship scheme is that it will typically build loyalty among employees. Whether a young person from outside the company or an existing member of staff, those who pass through apprenticeship schemes tend to be more loyal; in a survey of over [550 firms offering apprenticeships](#), the majority reported that apprentices stay longer than other recruits, with a third adding that apprentices are more committed to the business than other employees. Given the considerable costs of employee turnover, lost productivity, organisational knowledge and agency fees to find replacement team members, apprenticeships can be a useful and cost-effective way of demonstrating an investment in employees which can be rewarded through greater contribution.

In the technology sector, apprenticeships can prove particularly worthwhile. For one, as noted above, there is a shortage of experienced professionals available for hire when it comes to tech roles or tech businesses. So, while it will take time to come to fruition, creating an apprenticeship scheme can help an SME overcome the rigours of the highly competitive job market.

Backing for the programme needs to be sought from those that make strategic and financial decisions for the business but also from those that will be impacted by apprentices joining the organisation – teams, managers, HR, support staff etc.

Providing everyone involved with a clear understanding of what will be required is essential to any apprenticeship programme's success.

Getting a low level of buy-in from the whole organisation at this time may be useful also, letting everyone know about the apprenticeship programme, what it aims to achieve, when and how it will take place will help to ensure all staff feel engaged and supportive of the apprentices and the programme.

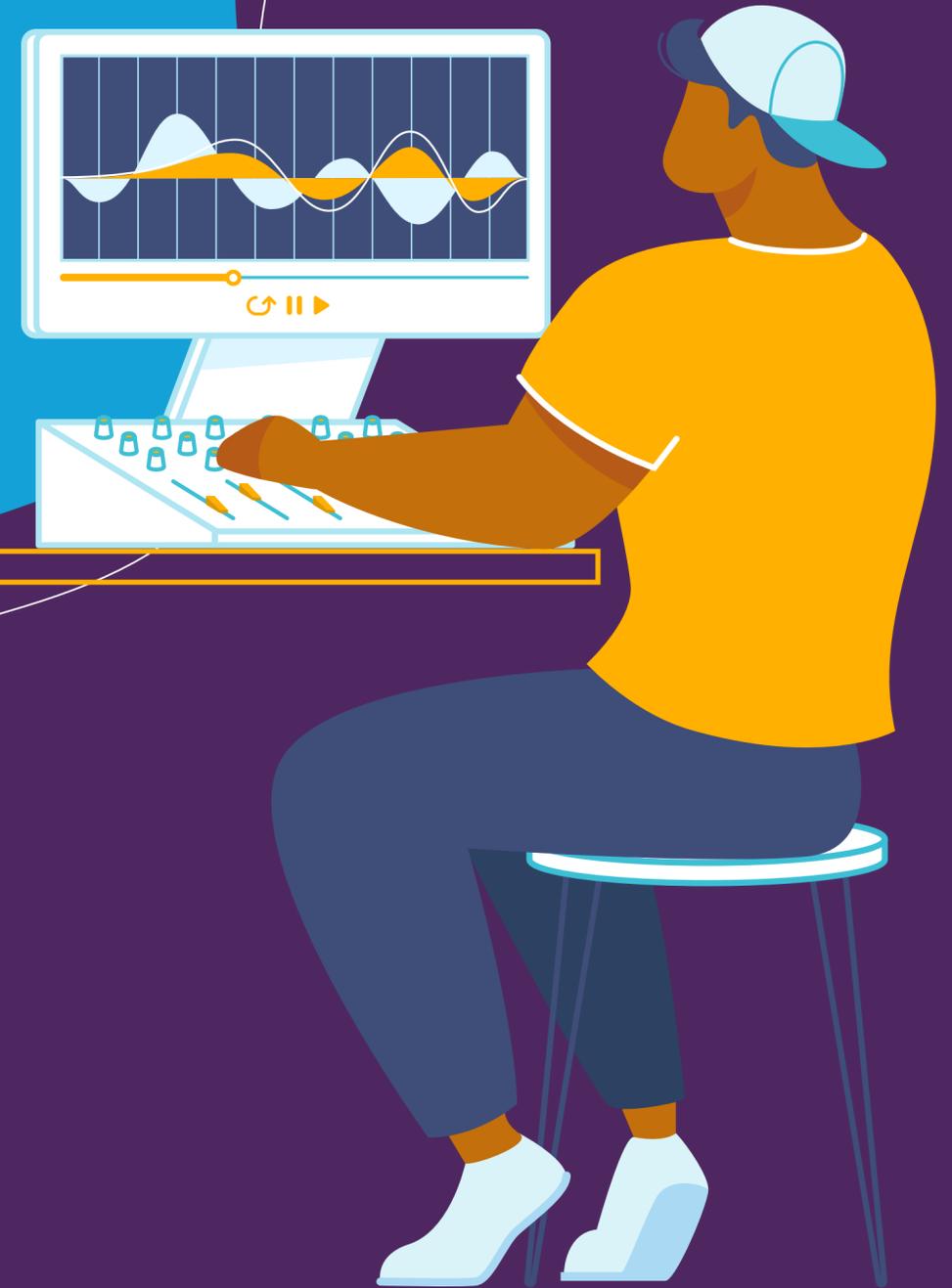
Having a member of the organisation to champion and spur on the programme is key to any apprenticeship programme.

With so many different people and teams involved ensuring one person has oversight of it all, from start to finish, will help things keep moving and provides a point of contact for anyone experiencing problems or seeking advice.

Please review our Zoopla case study in the appendix for more details.

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# What Tech apprenticeship does my company need?



# Steps

Before you start please ask yourself and your organisation the following question



What are you looking for an apprenticeship to achieve for your organisation?



What value do you want them to add?



How do they fit into your strategic plans?

Are you looking to use the programme for new hires or existing employees?

What apprenticeship standard do you want to choose?



What value you want from them?



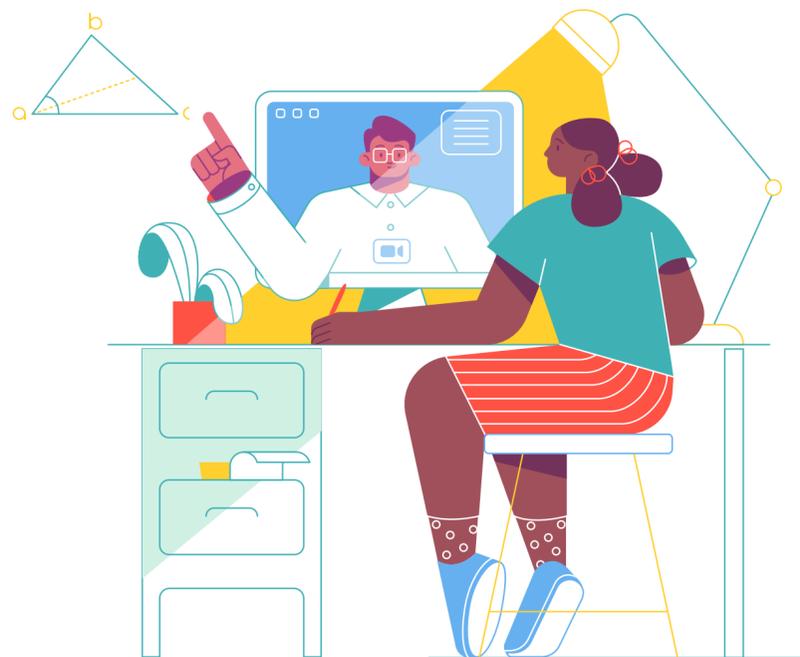
What do you want them to learn?

Look at the job description against apprenticeship standard



Which one is best aligned?

**Hiring an apprentice is a productive and effective way to grow talent and develop a motivated, diverse, skilled and qualified workforce, they can be suitable for new hires into a business or use to develop and upskill your current employees.**



There are a number of Tech apprenticeship standards available ranging from level 3 (GCSE's) up to Degree level to consider, each apprenticeship will have its own set of entry criteria and vary in duration. Each Tech apprenticeship programme is built on an apprenticeship standard that outline the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to carry out a certain job role.

[Search here >](#)

A list of all Tech apprenticeship standards can be found on the Institute for Apprentices website

When considering what apprenticeship you will need to also consider the job role the apprentice will be employed in whilst studying their apprenticeship programme, each occupational standard document will detail the typical job roles suggested for that apprenticeship programme.

Without the apprentice in a job role that will align with the apprenticeship standard they will not be able to apply their learning and gain the exposure required to evidence their work. To determine if the job role is suitable provide a job description for the role and compare against the occupational standard to satisfy that the competencies will be met.

To help you choose and understand the suitability of your chosen programme it's important to check that your organisation provides all of the technical aspects and systems the programme and apprentice will require. Without this the apprentice may not be able to meet all requirements of the programme.

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# Finding a training provider



## If looking for an external organisation to design and deliver the subject knowledge there are a number of things to consider.

- 1 Firstly, which organisation have the appropriate subject knowledge already on offer – there is a difference in tweaking or slightly altering existing content than developing completely new content is a subject or area they have no previous experience of.
- 2 Finding a provider that matches your organisation style and ethos may be of interest, or if you are using the apprenticeship programme to make bigger changes across the organisation then finding an external provider that portrays the changes you want to see within may be a good option.
- 3 Having open and honest discussions with more than one training provider is advised – you need to know the provider will be receptive to the needs of you're apprentices and your organisation.

### **Different delivery methods:**

There are different options for the delivery of your technical content - one intense block of teaching, smaller blocks of teaching or smaller, regular sessions. Your decision will depend on what's best for your business and the staff who will be supporting the apprentices, who is delivering the subject knowledge and how they want or prefer to deliver the content and the apprentices themselves. There is no 'right' way as all options have advantages and disadvantages.



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# Attraction & recruitment process



**The first awareness people will have of this opportunity will be via the advertisement so ensuring the words make people keep reading and strike the right chord with the audience you are targeting is important.**

Thinking carefully about what words are included and how they are used to describe the role and the organisation is important in attracting a diverse range of applicants. Including references to inclusivity and diversity in a meaningful way can tell an applicant a lot about their suitability to the role and the suitability of the organisation to them.

#### **Outreach**

Making sure the job ad is clear, concise and you add extra information to appeal to more specific audiences, by small changes of wording you can attract a completely different audience.

#### **In-house or with apprenticeship provider**

Using the documentation in section 3 around finding a training provider, you will have decided if you are going to do the recruitment process in-house or with a provider. This is something that needs to be discussed and decided before so you can work out who will be involved in the recruitment process

#### **Requirements, no tech experience needed**

It is important to know what we are looking for in candidates, as apprenticeships are usually targeting those with little / no experience in the area so they can gain the most from the apprenticeship and training given. Therefore when writing the job ad and speaking to candidates the requirements section is really important. For a tech apprenticeship there should be no tech qualifications needed, but any extra curricular activities in the subject will help give the candidate insight into if this is something they want to pursue.



# For the recruitment process its best to break it into stages.

- 1 **Work out who will be involved in the recruitment process** for example, recruiters, the provider (if using one), hiring managers, more senior members of P&T and maybe some HR representatives.
- 2 **Once you have outlined everyone in the process you need to outline the process itself**, what you want each stage to be and what you are trying to achieve from each stage. There will more than likely be a lot of applicants so you could put in an assessment to find out more about each candidate. Once you have filtered down from the assessments you can then have an initial screening call just to give more information to the candidate about the position and then tell them the next steps. Usually apprenticeships have assessment days which are the main 'interview' and give you a chance to see a lot of candidates at once with group activities which allow you to assess the candidates in a situation. It is key to come up with good activities that allow the candidates to all contribute, if using a provider they may already have an activity that you can amend to suit your apprenticeship.

Once the assessment day is over its a good idea to have a wash up with those involved in the day to outline who you will be progressing with and who will be rejected, this is also a good opportunity to gather feedback on the unsuccessful candidates so you can relay this back and give them constructive feedback that will help with their next opportunity.

If you have a few candidates following your assessment day you can decide to hold short 30min interviews on another day (so as not to drain the candidates as they can be long days) with the hiring manager and maybe HR. Then you should have gathered enough information to make your decision on your preferred candidate/ candidates, remember this is for an apprenticeship position and the candidate might not have done much interviewing before so it's important to not make the recruitment process too lengthy where possible.

- 3 **When you have the recruitment process mapped out you need to look at training of the selected assessors**; this is really important as apprentice assessing is different to hiring for a specific job as the skill sets required are not always as easy to see compared to hiring someone for a job with X years experience and you have a hour long technical interview. Giving the assessors training on what we should be looking for and also creating documentation for the assessors to use on the day as a guide will help keep everyone on the same page throughout the process.

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# Setting apprenticeship for success



# The addition of apprentices to any organisation may have an impact on staff across the organisation, or the organisation as a whole.

Ensuring that all staff are aware of the apprenticeship programme and are clear in where the responsibility sits and why the programme has been added will help all staff to be welcoming and open to the programme.



Review your regular onboarding process/ induction through the lens of the apprentice experience, especially if the apprentice is a young person for whom it might be their first job e.g., dress code, how line management will work, who to go to if they have a question, the logistics of the office or virtual working environment, main forms of communication whether that's slack, email, phone calls or any other platforms



Work in partnership with your learning provider to ensure both the apprentice and the line manager are confident in their knowledge of the educational journey from start to finish including modules, bootcamps, portfolios, key deadlines, exams, and the end point assessment



Work in partnership with your learning provider to ensure both the apprentice and the line manager have thought about how the apprentice can best use their 20% off the job training time in a way that is tailored to their role, therefore ensuring the apprentice is getting the most out of their working & learning experience and making an impact in their team



Where you have more than 1 apprentice, bring them together to develop a community feel and peer support network

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# Building a community



# Ensuring that apprentices feel part of a community can help to support their integration into the programme and the company.

Establishing a means for a group of apprentices to communicate, or in the case of one apprentice, a way for them to connect with others that have taken the apprenticeship route, will provide a safe space for questions to be asked and thoughts to be clarified.

## Keeping the apprentices engaged throughout the apprenticeship and also engaging to company

- Create a series of updates to show the company how well they are doing / what they are learning
- Create an apprentice slack channel so they can become their own community within the business
- Deliver weekly intro videos from the apprentices to show why they chose your apprenticeship and what they are learning

## Growing the apprentices community

- Keep weekly / fortnightly informal meetings for the apprentices and some other employees (not managers) to act as support and see how they are getting on and check in on social
- Make sure 1:1's are in place from the day they start (including bootcamp)
- Getting apprentices to attend meetings / company wide meetings from the day they start so they are getting to know faces
- Promote their work and their part in projects at all hands meetings and get them to present (if they are comfortable) to raise the overall profile of the programme

Understanding that there is no perfect setup to an apprenticeship programme and that changes and developments will probably be needed throughout and for any future programmes is essential.

Keeping track of aspects that work well and those that don't, as well as other options that could be tried in the future will ensure any apprenticeship programme is best suited to the needs and operations of your organisation, increasing the likelihood of these activities being embedded within the organisation rather than sitting alongside it.

Case Study: Step-by-Step Guide

# Technological Apprenticeships targeted at females



# This step-by-step guide to introducing technological apprenticeships targeted at females into your business/ organisation has been produced from information gathered from staff at Zoopla and the training provider Corndel.

Having designed and delivered a software engineering apprenticeship of which 70% were female and all of whom are now employed at Zoopla in their technology teams, staff and apprentices involved were interviewed and their processes, views and observations provided as a set of questions and guidance for others to follow. It is expected that other organisations will feed into this guidance as they too set up and deliver similar apprenticeship programmes.

## Beginning

### Clear purpose, need and capacity

Before committing to any kind of apprenticeship programme the purpose, need and capacity of the programme and business needs to be established. Having a clear purpose for the apprenticeship programme that also satisfies a need, or needs, of the organisation will help to secure buy-in from senior management and others throughout the organisation.

Capacity to pay for and support a cohort of apprentices is also essential research to undertake. If the funding for the duration of an apprenticeship cannot be confirmed then the programme should not go ahead. The same can be said for supporting the apprentices – whether that be the people to manage the apprentices, the teams they will sit in, the people that provide additional support and the general view of apprentices from all staff within the organisation – if the support is not in place willingly and from the start the success of any apprenticeship programme will be hard to achieve.

### Getting buy in

Backing for the programme needs to be sought from those that make strategic and financial decisions for the business but also from those that will be impacted by apprentices joining the organisation – teams, managers, HR, support staff etc. Providing everyone involved with a clear understanding of what will be required is essential to any apprenticeship programme's success. Getting a low level of buy-in from the whole organisation at this time may be useful also, letting everyone know about the apprenticeship programme, what it aims to achieve, when and how it will take place will help to ensure all staff feel engaged and supportive of the apprentices and the programme.

### Finding the right people for all stages

For those people that are required to provide a bigger commitment and effort to the programme, such as the apprentice's managers and support networks, finding the right people is vital. Organisations need to ensure that everyone working directly to support the programme is willing to take on the commitment, feels confident and has the appropriate skills to take on the activities. Staff with greater involvement in the programme also need reassurance that there is a realistic view from their managers and senior leaders of how an apprenticeship programme will impact their work and their productivity, as well as the additional support and training they may need.

# Setting up the Apprenticeship

## What team or teams

Deciding where to place the apprentices is an important step in setting up an apprenticeship programme in your organisation. You need to consider not only what aspects/projects/activities the apprentices will be working on but also how their addition to the team will impact the productivity of the team but also the other members of the team, especially that manager of the team and/or manager of the apprentice. Placement of an apprentice in a specific team needs to be done so for a specific reason or desired outcome, for example, to add capacity in a specific skill (eventually) or to bring new skills into the team.

## How many apprentices

Deciding the size of your apprenticeship cohort is an important first step. Ideally you want a group rather than a singular apprentice to help the apprentices feel part of a community rather than alone. A group means they have people of similarity to ask questions and share concerns.

## Finding the managers

The key element of any apprenticeship programme are the managers brought on board to support, nurture and develop the apprentices. Ideally the people chosen to take on this role have a willingness to do so and are aware of the full requirements and consequences of supporting the development of someone new to the organisation and the subject. Apprentice managers need to be patient,

communicative, able to multi-task and adaptable, all while continuing to carry out the day-to-day duties of their role. These managers may need additional support or training themselves. Providing the Subject Knowledge What are the needs of the business Depending on what team, or teams, your apprentices will be part of will significantly impact the subject knowledge and skills required by the apprentices. Having a clear understanding of what the business needs are from the apprentices and therefore their learning is of vital importance. What are the needs of the apprentices The needs of the apprentices themselves are also vitally important. While the subject knowledge is essential, so too are the additional needs of individuals entering into a learning environment – support from the business and their managers, understanding the applications and use of their new skills and knowledge, feeling part of their team as early as possible.

## What are the needs of an apprenticeship programme

To be classed as an official apprenticeship programme which in turn may enable your business to use the apprenticeship levy or appropriate grants the programme will likely have to contain certain activities or topics that may not be relevant to your business e.g. the use of a programming language that is not supported by your organisation but is a necessity for the regulations of an official apprenticeship.

## Who will deliver the subject content

Whether you have the subject knowledge delivered by internal or external staff will depend on whether you have the appropriate skills and resource within your organisation.

## Finding an external provider

If looking for an external organisation to design and deliver the subject knowledge there are a number of things to consider. Firstly, which organisation have the appropriate subject knowledge already on offer – there is a difference in tweaking or slightly altering existing content than developing completely new content is a subject or area they have no previous experience of. Finding a provider that matches your organisation style and ethos may be of interest, or if you are using the apprenticeship programme to make bigger changes across the organisation then finding an external provider that portrays the changes you want to see within may be a good option. Having open and honest discussions with more than one training provider is advised – you need to know the provider will be receptive to the needs of you're apprentices and your organisation.

## Delivery method

There are different options for the delivery of your technical content - one intense block of teaching, smaller blocks of teaching or smaller, regular sessions. Your decision will depend on what's best for your business and the staff who will be supporting the apprentices, who are delivering the subject knowledge and how they want or prefer to deliver the content and the apprentices themselves. There is no 'right' way as all options have advantages and disadvantages.

## What is produced

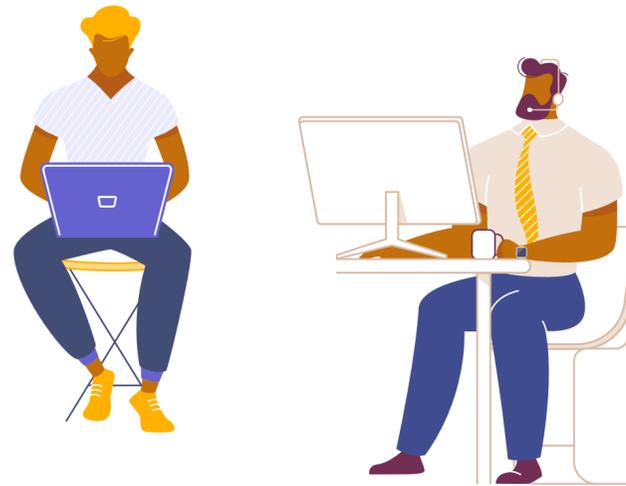
If working with an external provider the decision of what apprentices produce in their training may not be something you can control but when developing the training objectives consider how it feels for the apprentices to spend a lot of time practicing or working on a project that has no value or use to their future work or the organisation.

Training may have to be delivered, for the purpose of regulation, in certain programming languages for example that are not used by your organisation. This may mean that apprentices feel they have to 'start again' once they join their team full time. A clear discussion with those delivering the training and subject knowledge about what must be included and what is actually of use to the business would be helpful.

## Setting up the right Support

### Supporting the Apprentices

Apprentices may be new to a big organisation, new to the subject or even new to being in a structured working environment so it is important to set up their support well right from the start. Putting support in place for formal needs such as day-to-day management, productivity, subject related, HR and informal needs such as how the organisation works, who you go to for certain things, social activities, a community of others etc. should be thought out and allocated whether it gets used or not.



### Supporting the Managers

Managers with the day-to-day support and development of apprentices assigned to them will need support as well. It may be specific training with regards to apprentice needs, extra capacity within the team or someone to trouble-shoot with and share problems with. None of it may be needed but providing the apprentice managers with the reassurance and knowledge of the support that is there and can be there will enable the managers to take on the role of apprentice manager with confidence.

### Supporting the Organisation

The addition of apprentices to any organisation may have an impact on staff across the organisation, or the organisation as a whole. Ensuring that all staff are aware of the apprenticeship programme and are clear in where the responsibility sits and why the programme has been added will help all staff to be welcoming and open to the programme.

## Getting Applications

### Writing the advertisement

The first awareness people will have of this opportunity will be via the advertisement so ensuring the words make people keep reading and strike the right chord with the audience you are targeting is important. Thinking carefully about what words are included and how they are used to describe the role and the organisation is important in attracting a diverse range of applicants. Including references to inclusivity and diversity in a meaningful way can tell an applicant a lot about their suitability to the role and the suitability of the organisation to them. The example used by Zoopla can be found at the end of this document.

### Placing the advertisement

Where you place the advertisement is just as important as how it is written. Think about who you want to attract and how you want the organisation to be portrayed will guide you to specific outlets over others. For example, some job advertising websites are known for their promotion of diversity, some are used by a wide range of people looking for a wide range of jobs e.g. Total Jobs, if working with a training provider they may also have their own preferred advertisement mechanisms or their own recruitment webpages. The key is that if you want a more diverse range of applicants you have to advertise in places with a more diverse range of users.

## Picking the right Applicants

### Filtering the applications

Filtering the applications can be an arduous and time consuming task but getting this right can significantly improve the success of your apprenticeship programme. Having a clear set of criteria for what you would consider and what you would not will help in the first stage of filtering. You can immediately disregard those that don't have the right GCSEs (if required) or haven't completed the application as instructed. But things you might say yes to include knowledge (even if only basic) of the subject, steps the candidate has taken to learn the basic skills e.g. coding clubs or online tutorials or understand more about the industry, and other skills and attributes that might benefit the organisation. Having a clear but realistic idea of what you are looking for will help filter the candidates. If working with a training provider they may undertake the filtering process for you but you will still need to set clear guidance for what you are looking for.

### Filtering +

A next level filtering process may include conversations with candidates to bring to life the aspects they have listed on their application and to get a better sense of the person applying. This is a time-consuming process but it may be of great use to decide between candidates and find out greater detail about which candidates would be the best fit for your organisation and your teams.

## Assessment Centres

If conducting an assessment centre for your applicants ensure that you are clear in what you want to portray as well what you want to assess. How you set up your assessment centre, how you staff it etc. can tell a candidate a great deal about your organisation and may cause applicants to be put off or to be unable to show their skills well. Also note that an assessment centre design/process you currently use for other apprenticeship or graduate programmes may not necessarily be the most suitable for this.

### Looking for potential

What you expect and want to see from the candidates is always important to establish and share amongst staff prior to the beginning of the event. In most cases of apprenticeships, the subject knowledge of candidates is low, therefore your team will need to look for other skills and attributes that are desirable to your organisation. Whether that be problem solving, logical thinking, communication, collaborative, a clear set of criteria will help all involved. Also be aware of the interactions between candidates as well as between candidate and staff. In house or external If working with a training provider, reviewing the applications and picking the best candidates may be a job they can undertake on your behalf. This can be of benefit

## Welcoming the Apprentices

### Joining and being part of their team

Apprentices can be officially made part of their team at various points in the apprenticeship process. It could be as soon as they start the programme, even if they are completing the subject knowledge training in one big block at the start, or they might be introduced to the whole team once training is over. There is no perfect way to do this and different organisations and managers will prefer different options but the key here is to discuss the options and let all those involved decide the best way to bring them on board. Whether that be making time for the apprentices to attend team meetings on a weekly basis even if they're still in training or arranging a more formal introduction

### Meeting each other

Ensuring that apprentices feel part of a community can help to support their integration into the programme and the company. Establishing a means for a group of apprentices to communicate, or in the case of one apprentice, a way for them to connect with others that have taken the apprenticeship route, will provide a safe space for questions to be asked and thoughts to be clarified.

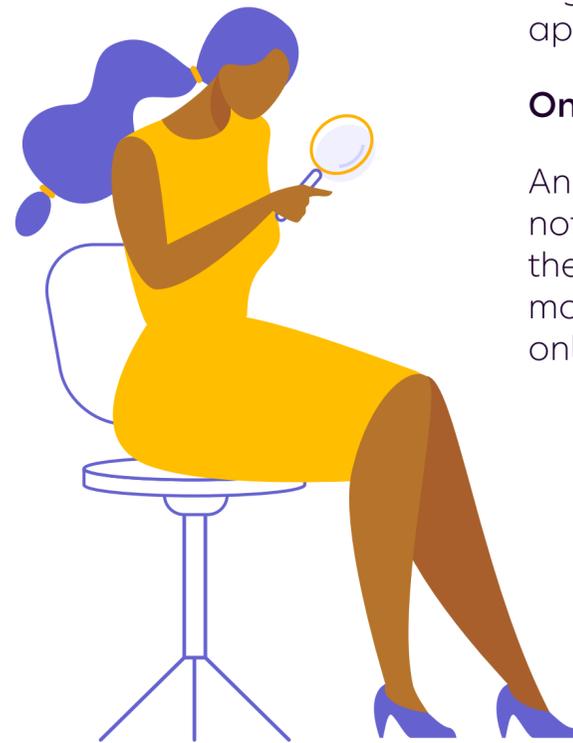
## Managing Expectations

### Apprentice skills and confidence

In most cases apprentices have very little subject knowledge or relevant work experience when joining an apprenticeship programme so having a realistic view of their skills and abilities even after their training is complete is important. Apprentices will likely feel unsure and nervous about doing the right thing and doing it correctly for some time.

### Team productivity

The addition of one or more people with a 'beginner' or 'entry level' skill set into a team or teams will reduce the productivity of that team and this should be expected and accounted for. Productivity will also be reduced as the people providing support to the apprentices (whether in the team or elsewhere within the organisation) will be utilising some of their time on these supporting tasks.



## Female Specifics

### Getting females attention

The key to targeting females can be as simple as getting the messaging of role advertisement right. Ensuring gender neutral language is used and in some cases making specific reference to the desire for female applicants can be all that's needed to increase the number of females that apply.

### Covert not overt

How you set up your apprenticeship does not need to be overtly female focused, rather, by ensuring that the needs and views of females have been considered at every step will not only make it better for females, it will make it more inclusive for all. Considerations such as use of wording and content of images, how assessment centres are organised and reviewed, staff supporting at every stage of application through to apprenticeship completion.

### Only hiring females

An apprenticeship programme targeted at females does not mean you only hire females. As with any role you hire the person that is the best fit for the role. However, if hiring more than one apprentice then ensuring that there isn't only one female, or one male, in the group is a good idea.

### Fellow females

Females do not solely need to be with other females. Female apprentices should not only be managed by female managers. Enabling a female apprentice to share a community or have access to other females is important but the key to a successful apprenticeship programme is in the quality of the support they receive, not the gender of the people from whom they receive it.

### Being Observant

Whether you are a male or female manager or supporter, paying attention to interactions and behaviours of all apprentices is important to help ensure their success. Apprentices may not feel easily able to share their issues or concerns or talk about the impact of other team members so looking out for changes or strange behaviour and communications is a must for anyone directly involved with apprentices.

### Impact on males

Many males will also have a positive reaction to both a female-targeted advertisement and a supportive organisation. The female targeted advertisement sets a view of the ethos and operations of the organisation which can be attractive to males who want to work in such an organisation. Ensuring the support mechanisms for the apprentices is also a clear benefit to males as well as females on the programme. Apprentices no matter the gender are all likely to experience the same feelings of worry or inability and will benefit from strong support.

## What Helps

### Having a Champion

Having a member of the organisation to champion and spur on the programme is key to an apprenticeship programme such as this. With so many different people and teams involved ensuring one person has oversight of it all, from start to finish, will help things keep moving and provides a point of contact for anyone experiencing problems or seeking advice.

Clear purpose and expectations Setting a clear purpose and expectation of the apprenticeship programme will help to ensure successful completion. Having a clear view of where the apprentices will fit into the organisation, where they will meet a need and how they can add value to the organisation as a whole will ensure there is always a target to work towards and clear goals to be achieved.

Knowing things don't always go to plan No matter how well anything is planned something will not go to plan. Being prepared for such eventualities is essential and having a prepared network of people to help resolve issues quickly will ensure the smooth running of the apprenticeship programme.

### Constant Learning

Understanding that there is no perfect setup to an apprenticeship programme and that changes and developments will probably be needed throughout and for any future programmes is essential. Keeping track of aspects that work well and those that don't, as well as other options that could be tried in the future will ensure any apprenticeship programme is best suited to the needs and operations of your organisation, increasing the likelihood of these activities being embedded within the organisation rather than sitting alongside it.

### The right people

At all stages of the apprenticeship programme having the right people in place is absolutely vital. Whether that be the people that set up the programme, the people that deliver the technical aspects, the managers that support the apprentices and the individuals and teams that interact with them, everyone needs to be supportive and realistic of the reality of what having and being an apprentice means for the business and the staff within it.

### Full commitment

No matter what type or what size of apprenticeship programme being delivered, the commitment for seeing it through to the end must be there from the very start.

Commitment to the success of the programme will ensure that problems are overcome and the apprentices and all staff involved get the best experience and outcomes of the programme.

