

Youth Employment Toolkit Unwrapped for EMPLOYERS

Apprenticeships

INTRO

Toolkit Unwrapped brings to life Youth Futures Foundation's evidence for employers, with learnings from high-quality research about how you can help marginalised young people to gain and sustain good quality jobs, whilst benefiting from recruiting untapped talent in a tight labour market.

As a [What Works Centre](#), we're committed to helping decision makers access the best available evidence on youth employment, supporting them to make decisions about where best to invest resources. Our [Youth Employment Toolkit](#) presents data from high-quality, international research that sets out how likely it is that a particular intervention *caused* a positive change in employment outcomes (whether it 'worked'), specific to marginalised young people.

Our resources aim to cut through the complexity of the evidence and data, dissecting and bringing to life what we know about the impact and quality of interventions in the Youth Employment Toolkit, such as Apprenticeships and Wage Subsidy Schemes, to name a few.

Our goal is to support employers to proactively invest in activity that is more likely to be effective and has the most impactful outcomes, both for the employer and for the young person. Through this series of resources, we hope to provide guidance for employers looking to start or refine their journey towards better supporting young people from marginalised backgrounds into meaningful and sustainable employment.

You can [explore this theme in more detail on our website](#), where you'll find:

- Videos sharing best practice for employers
- Case studies of employers who've used this intervention
- Webinars with young people, experts from across the youth employment sector and employers
- Other resources from the Toolkit Unwrapped series for employers

The next theme in this series is on-the-job training.

For more information on Youth Futures Foundation and our Youth Employment Toolkit please head to the back page of this resource where you will also find links to accessible versions of this resource.

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WHY SHOULD EMPLOYERS INVEST IN APPRENTICESHIPS?

The world of work is changing, and the hunt to recruit and retain talent for future prosperity, economic growth and resilience has never been more important for employers. Young people are the labour market of the future and are a key asset for employers looking to future proof their workforces. It is vital that employers are motivated and able to recruit young people from marginalised groups, and understand they might need more tailored support to find and keep a good job.

The reward for addressing youth unemployment in the UK is large. [The Youth Futures and PwC 2022 Youth Employment Index report](#) found that if we matched the NEET rates found in Germany, it could add £38bn to our economy. And retaining a talented and diverse workforce is proven to be beneficial, employers with more diverse teams have 36% better financial returns, according to [BITC's Race at Work Survey 2021](#).

[Youth Futures Foundations Employment Toolkit](#) launched in 2022 suggests that, on average, for every 10 young people who can take part in an apprenticeship as a targeted youth employment intervention, one will get a job who wouldn't have done so without the intervention. Whilst limitations remain in terms of the volume of studies available current research does show that apprenticeships could have a high positive impact on youth employment outcomes and should therefore be considered by employers looking to change the dial for young people from marginalised backgrounds.

When looking at how to roll out effective apprenticeships employers can make a big difference by properly supporting the apprentices to both gain and sustain opportunities.

[Analysis of government data by the London Progression Collaboration \(LPC\)](#) shows that since 2014/15, entry-level apprenticeship starts in England have plummeted by 72 per cent, while at the same time starts in higher level apprenticeships, often taken up by older people, have skyrocketed by 400 per cent. [Research by the Learning & Work](#)

[Institute](#) found that just over a third of apprentices who drop out of their programme felt that a lack of support from their employer had contributed to their decision to leave. Youth Futures' analysis found that young apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds have lower achievement, retention, and pass rates than their white peers. [This could indicate systemic barriers and unequal access to resources.](#)

But young people from diverse backgrounds are enthusiastic about vocational training. In our upcoming report on our Workplace Discrimination Survey we found that young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds favour training and upskilling interventions as ways to overcome disadvantage. 22% wanted to see guaranteed internships and apprenticeship placements for ethnically minoritised young people.

Within this resource we will share our top tips for employers looking to deliver inclusive, accessible and equitable apprenticeship programmes.

WHAT IS AN APPRENTICESHIP?

An apprenticeship provides vocational training through:

- Paid work and **on-the-job training** with an employer, occupying most of the apprentice's time.
- **Off-the-job training** supplied by an accredited learning provider such as a college, university, or independent training provider. Apprenticeships include a substantial element of off-the-job training alongside on-the-job training and work experience. All or most of a young person's time in an on-the-job training programme is spent in the workplace.

Apprenticeships focus on the development of skills required for a specific occupation. They last for twelve months or more, and lead to a recognised qualification.

In England, apprenticeships are offered at levels from 2 to 7. Level 2 is equivalent to five GCSE passes, and Level 7 is equivalent to postgraduate study. People of all ages can become apprentices, but in the Youth Employment Toolkit only data on young apprentices is included.

In England, [apprenticeships](#) are funded by the 'Apprenticeship Levy', which is collected from large employers. They are overseen by the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#), and delivered through partnerships between employers and education providers.

Young people may enter apprenticeships for different reasons; they may want an entry-level role in a particular job or sector, an opportunity to upskill in an existing job, or a study pathway when they have left compulsory education. Apprenticeships are designed to give learners the skills and training they need for their chosen industry, and demonstrate their learning with a recognised qualification.

How does it work?

An apprenticeship combines job-specific skills through the on-the-job component with more general skills training. So, when a business hires an apprentice, they can teach them exactly what they need to know to work in a particular sector and type of role. This means that when the apprentice finishes their training, they are ready to start work right away. Because they have already worked at the company, they are more likely to get a job that is related to their apprenticeship. The employer similarly has a chance to assess the suitability of the young person. The apprentice is also more likely to remain employed, and to keep learning and progressing in their career. This also benefits the businesses that hire apprentices, as it helps to create a skilled workforce.

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO

Here are three of our top₂ evidence-based considerations for employers₅ in making your apprenticeship offering impactful, accessible and inclusive for young people from marginalised backgrounds. See the following section to follow our Employer Action Plan and to take your next steps.

1. **Effective outreach and recruitment, with targeted initiatives for under-represented groups**

Effectively **finding and onboarding young apprentices** needs high quality outreach and structured recruitment, including targeted initiatives for under-represented groups.

We know that people professionals often rely on communication channels they usually use to advertise roles, such as newspapers or online job boards. However, disadvantaged young people might not have access to these channels due to a lack of resources, like internet access, or knowledge about the professional world. Messaging on job adverts may not feel relevant or might even paint a picture of the ideal candidate that is not compatible with their self-view. This may deter candidates from underprivileged backgrounds from even applying for a job.¹

Where an under-represented group has been identified as a target for your apprenticeship recruitment, these young people may benefit from proactive and targeted outreach.

Recommendations for employer practice:

- **Invest in getting to know the target group(s)** – their activities, interests, networks and social gathering places. A localised approach, even if you are a national employer, can be beneficial

¹ Youth Futures Foundation and CIPD, 2022, [Recruiting Young People Facing Disadvantage](#)

in understanding barriers and opportunities specific to the areas you're recruiting in.

- **Support current apprentices to act as 'role models'** within their communities, providing training and coaching for them to become ambassadors for apprenticeship routes.
- **Promote apprenticeship opportunities through non-traditional, informal networks.** One way to do this could be by working with local community-based youth organisations.
- **Partner with people or organisations,** such as charities or social enterprises, that already work with disadvantaged young people to better understand their needs and issues.
- **Consider recruitment materials that address under-represented groups,** such as women in the construction and IT sectors, or men in health & social care.
- **Design, implement and promote inclusive internal policies,** such as flexible working, specialist equipment allowances or remote working, that address the barriers to participation that may affect specific under-represented groups, such as young parents, carers or those with long-term health conditions.

2. Inclusive Line Management

The age-old tale that people join an organisation but leave their boss has some evidenced truth behind it. We know that line managers who adopt a transformational leadership style can affect the inclusivity in a work environment. Transformative Leadership is when a manager leads by creating a shared vision and empowers people to pursue it, encouraging divergent thinking and responding to the individual needs of their team members. This style of line management has shown associations with increased job satisfaction and organisational commitment of team members.”²

Young people who are at risk of marginalisation in the labour market may experience barriers which prevent them in participating in

² Youth Futures Foundation and CIPD, 2022 [Retaining Disadvantaged Young People in Work](#)

apprenticeships. Special educational needs, psychological health and wellbeing issues, financial hardship and being a part of an ethnically marginalised community, are all factors which play a role in disadvantaging young people when seeking employment opportunities. Therefore the need for empathetic, fair and patient line managers is paramount in ensuring that young apprentices feel supported, seen and included. This should be the case from their very first day in employment.

Some or all of the following kinds of support may contribute to successful engagement and completion of apprenticeships for young people who face additional barriers in the labour market:

- **Line management training for managers** (both in Inclusive and Transformational leadership styles)
- **One-to-one specialist support**, for those with additional needs
- **Referrals to additional external services**
- **Peer support networks for managers** line-managing apprentices

Whilst the Learning and Work Institute have written [a helpful guide to line managing apprentices](#), emerging learning from Youth Futures-funded programmes at Workwhile indicates that bespoke support to employers during the on-boarding process for apprentices (e.g. line manager training) is likely to support successful apprenticeship delivery (especially for young people facing additional barriers). Let's hear what they're up to:

MEET THE GRANTEE- who are we funding

Workwhile (formerly London Progression Collaboration/ LPC) exists to support employers to create new apprenticeships for low-paid Londoners, which support progression into and in work. The initiative is incubated by think tank the Institute for Public Policy Research, and has created over 1,750 new apprenticeships since its

launch in 2020. Our continued grant funding will support Workwhile to work with small and medium-sized businesses to create over 1,000 new apprenticeships for young Londoners over a three-year period, focusing on those from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds, as well as to expand its mission-driven apprenticeship levy transfer service. In addition, the funding will enable Workwhile to pilot a new “progression support programme”, working with apprentices’ line managers to boost the impact of young people’s apprenticeships. Finally, Workwhile will develop an enhanced knowledge-sharing programme within its extensive networks of employers and apprenticeship training providers.

Through their DevelopMentor Training, Workwhile are providing London-based SMEs with fully-funded training to support apprentices’ line managers to implement the core practices of high-quality line management. Underpinned by the latest research and evidence on how to develop successful teams through employee engagement, following the training, line managers report increased confidence and skills managing their apprentice, whilst apprentices have improved performance and progression, report greater job satisfaction, and are more likely to be retained.

To find out more about Workwhile, please visit their website <https://workwhile.org.uk/>

3. **Working in Partnership**

Working closely with others matters to drive successful outcomes. This includes close collaboration and join-up at all stages between apprenticeships education providers and employers, and ensuring apprenticeships offer a close match to local labour markets, making sure apprentices can transition into full-time jobs.

A strong relationship between education providers, local services and employers supports effective apprenticeship implementation. This includes:

- Collaboration at all levels and stages of implementation of apprenticeships
- Clarity on responsibilities and roles of organisations and individuals, with a designated individual in each organisation with responsibility for the relationship.
- A detailed examination of the relationship between classroom, workshop and workplace learning, that brings together tutors, team leaders and managers.
- Regular opportunities for staff training and good practice sharing.
- Sufficient time during the work elements of the programme for apprentices to reflect on their learning and engage in on-the-job training activities.
- Opportunities for college tutors to spend time in the workplaces where apprentices are based, to improve their own understanding of current industry practice.

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY: N Family Club

Founded in 2017, [N Family Club](#) provides nursery care to families across 31 nurseries within England. Identifying a shortage of qualified early years practitioners N Family Club has invested significant time and resource into their apprenticeship programmes across all of their sites.

Speaking to Sophie Hayter, Senior Talent Development Partner at N Family Club we took a deep dive into why they took the apprenticeship route, what their challenges and successes have been and what they think other employers should think about when setting up apprenticeships within their organisations.

N Family Club currently support around 140 apprentices out of a workforce of roughly 1000, covering a range of areas from Early Years Level 2/3, Lead Practitioner at Level 5, to a Chef's apprenticeship and opportunities for office staff to take on courses in areas such as Team Leadership.

They are intentional in offering the Level 2, in acknowledgement that some of their apprentices might need to develop other skills, for example some might still be doing their Maths & English at college, whilst doing their apprenticeship.

Recruiting from a diverse range of backgrounds is important to N Family Club who are rooted in the communities that they serve. Having apprentices who are representative of those communities is invaluable. It helps their families and children feel welcome and understood, both culturally and practically, as their apprentices can translate and speak their own first languages with our families and children.

Beyond traditional routes to advertising roles, N Family Club, do a lot of outreach in local schools, colleges and community spaces, enabling young people to see a pathway into Early Years and opportunities in this sector. Taking a personalised approach to deciding which apprenticeship level to offer, they work with each applicant to ensure

that they are placed on a course which will work for them – wanting every apprentice to succeed!

N Family Club have their own internal Learning Academy, where they provide mentor training for all mentors and line managers who are working with apprentices, ensuring that those who are working with them feel supported and skilled when doing so.

There do remain challenges in terms of representation including attracting more men into early years roles and a challenge in recruiting in some of their more rural or suburban areas, where access to more affordable, reliable and easy to access public transport is a challenge. They have also had to take steps to support their youngest apprentices (aged 16) who are in their first job and do not have the same preparedness for work. They support their apprentices to develop these skills and for the first 3 months don't count our new apprentices as staff in ratio to children, just so there is an easing in period and to give younger apprentices a chance to adopt and practice basic work skills.

For employers looking to take on apprentices, Sophie's top tips include;

“Be openminded, when you take on an apprentice- they are not the final package. They won't know everything when they start and you've got to be patient with them and invest time, support and resource before they transform into the workers that you need. This won't happen overnight and each young person is on a very different journey from the next.

My other piece of advice is to use the Levy Transfer Scheme- this can be a great help in covering the cost of the apprentices' training. Many small employers don't know where to start with this or have no idea it exists. We've had invaluable support from an organization called [Workwhile](#), who have supported us to get additional funding from large employers who aren't using their own levy and have offered to transfer over to us. I'd recommend that all employers look into how the Levy Transfer Scheme can help them.

Finally, don't forget to celebrate the achievements of your apprentices. When someone passes their final assessments or reaches a milestone, we celebrate that and show that we have such pride in their achievements."

To see the full length versions of our case study with N Family Club on their apprenticeship programmes, [please click here](#).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS

Did you know that most employers in England are eligible for a financial incentive of £1,000 from the Government for taking on an apprentice who is:

- A, aged 16-18 years old or
- B, aged 19 to 25 and has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or has been in the care of their local authority.

This financial incentive is designed to support employers to cover the costs associated with supporting an apprentice in the workplace. It could be spent on uniforms, a travel card for the apprentice or IT equipment that suits their individual access needs.

To find out more about this financial incentive and how to claim it, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/incentive-payments-for-hiring-a-new-apprentice>

We spoke to one of our Future Voices Group ambassadors* about the £1000 financial incentive for employers. With personal experience of the care system, and having recently accepted an offer to do a trainee nursing associate apprenticeship, we asked them to tell us about why financial support for employers hosting apprentices who are leaving the care system is particularly important.

“Many of us [care leavers] have had to be independent from a very young age. Apprenticeships allow us to continue doing this, accessing the same qualifications as others whilst getting a wage and giving us the flexibility to be able to fit in consistent and important appointments with professional support workers in our lives.

As independent and mature as we might be, due to our life experiences, it’s important for employers to remember that we are

still young people who need support when entering the world of work; sometimes in ways that our peers may not need. This could be help with administrative tasks, such as filling out onboarding paperwork due to complicated housing arrangements or a lack of ID, or more practical support, such as money upfront for public transport. These things can create barriers to young care leavers accessing work, but they could easily be broken down by more employers using the financial support offered by the Government.

Useful ways that employers could invest this money could include providing essential study aids like a laptop, stationary, help with travelling to the apprenticeship, uniforms or an allowance for work attire. I would also suggest that this funding could cover the cost for training an allocated member of staff in how to support care leavers. This skillset would ensure that care leavers feel both emotionally and practically supported at work.”

**The [Future Voices Group](#) puts youth voice at the heart of Youth Futures Foundation. Collectively these twenty young people, aged 16-24, feed into our vision and strategy and act as our ambassadors and advocates for young people across England on the issue of employment.*

ACTION PLAN FOR EMPLOYERS

If your company or organisation is looking to take the next steps to enhancing your inclusive apprenticeship offering, why not start by ticking off some of these best practice actions:

1. **Utilise the Government's £1,000 financial incentive** to give employers additional resource to support apprentices with additional needs. See our section for more information.
2. **Advertise apprenticeship roles on unconventional, local or community platforms** which speak to young people (such as on social media, via community services or in college newsletters) and by supporting existing apprentices to play a role in advocating for apprenticeship routes in their own communities.
3. **Source inclusive and transformative line management training** for your staff working with apprentices
4. **Work in partnership with specialist organisations** who can support apprentices with additional needs, whilst supporting your organization to be more accessible by default
5. **Forge strong relationships with apprenticeship education providers**, ensuring a joined up approach and clarity in roles and responsibilities between organisations.
6. **Apply your flexible working policies and benefits to all staff**, including apprentices, from day 1. This will enable young parents, carers or those with regular healthcare appointments to thrive in their apprenticeship positions.
7. **Collect your own data.** Host an internal feedback survey for your young apprentices to ensure their feedback, needs and ideas are heard and then acted upon. Make sure to include anonymised diversity monitoring questions, so you can see if there are any patterns or disparities of experiences between marginalised groups.

SIGNPOSTING

Evidence

- Youth Futures Foundation's [Youth Employment Toolkit](#) provides an up-to-date curation of [evidence on apprenticeships](#) as an intervention to support youth employment for those furthest away from the labour market.
- The UK [Institute for Apprenticeships](#).
- The Department for Education publishes data on [Apprenticeships](#).
- The impact evaluation of the [Youth Employment Initiative](#), which sought both to provide additional apprenticeship and traineeship places, re-engage marginalised young people, and address basic skills and pre-employment training, includes extensive information on how to implement these interventions well.

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Support

- [National Apprenticeship Week](#) (NAW) takes place annually in February. Visit the NAW website for resources and information about how to participate.
- The UK Government's [apprenticeships](#) website and [apprenticeship funding rules](#).
- The Learning and Work Institute publishes [comprehensive materials](#) on good practice in apprenticeship provision, including [improving the apprentice experience](#).
- [Workwhile](#) exists to support employers to create new apprenticeships for low-paid Londoners, which support progression into and in work.
- [Amazing Apprenticeships](#) is a leading organisation in the education sector, founded to tackle misconceptions about apprenticeships and promote the benefits.
- [The Multicultural Apprenticeship Alliance](#) is a key partner helping promote social mobility, diversity, inclusion and equality in apprenticeships.
- [Association of Apprenticeships](#) support apprentices by connecting them to a network of peers, mentors, and social

groups, as well as providing career-boosting resources and guidance.

YOUTH FUTURES FOUNDATION

Youth Futures Foundation is the national What Works Centre for youth employment. Our aim is to narrow employment gaps by identifying what works and why, investing in evidence generation and innovation, and igniting a movement for change so that young people facing the greatest challenges can find and keep good quality jobs.

Under our Employer Strategy we want to create opportunities with employers where they recruit and retain more young people from marginalised backgrounds, ensuring equitable access to good quality jobs.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TOOLKIT

The Youth Employment Toolkit, launched in July 2023, is a free, online resource for anyone seeking evidence-based guidance on policy and practice to improve youth employment outcomes. It contains summaries of rigorous literature reviews that draw together evidence from multiple evaluations of youth employment programmes in high-income countries across the globe. The Toolkit also presents information about how the interventions can be implemented, descriptions of the kinds of evidence that were used in the underlying research, and links to additional resources.

If an intervention isn't included in the Toolkit, that doesn't mean that it is not effective. It only means that it hasn't been included in the Toolkit yet. The Toolkit is a 'living' resource that we will update regularly, with additional interventions and new evidence about those that are already included.

To stay up to date with the latest news and development's from Youth Futures Foundation, [please sign up for our newsletter](#).

FOR ACCESSIBLE VERSIONS OF THIS RESOURCE (plain text and large font), [please follow this link](#). For an audio version, we recommend using an online PDF reading tool such as Adobe Reader or Speechify.