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# Apprenticeships



**'I value getting experience  
employers look for'**

**Kate Nannery, apprentice** *page 14*

**Apprenticeships****Inside****Introduction**  
Coco Khan

*The practical way to get on the right career path*

**T**his year apprenticeships, in their modern form, turn 25 years old. Designed to offer people a career path outside of the traditional university route, apprenticeships combine education with on-the-job training to allow its trainees to earn while they earn. Such an approach has its roots as far back as the middle ages - as Sue George discovers in her piece charting the history of apprenticeships (page 21) - but that does not mean that apprenticeships today lack innovation. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

From creating groundbreaking schemes that reach neurodiverse candidates (page 4) to playing a role in regenerating regions (page 9) apprenticeships are tapping into previously hard-to-reach areas and communities.

And despite their reputation for being all hi-vis vests and hard hats, apprenticeships can take people into all corners of industry and business (page 27). Our cover story looks at how apprenticeships are helping to attract workers into horticulture - a sector that has traditionally struggled to attract new recruits - while elsewhere we look at the continued drive to draw women into traditionally male fields (page 11). We also have advice for parents of school-leavers (page 16). Whichever path you or your child wants to tread, apprenticeships can get you there. And in this issue, we hope to show you how.

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# Apprenticeships

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# Apprentices

## Loyal, skilled, but still ignored by too many small firms

Business owners who invest in apprenticeships are full of praise for on-the-job training, so why aren't more SMEs embracing the schemes?

**Jenny Little**

**A**pprenticeships can boost a business' productivity. They bring new ideas and make loyal employees. So, why are small businesses not training more tailor-made talent? In England, 375,800 people started

apprenticeships in 2017 to 2018. But England and the rest of the UK lags behind countries such as Germany, Denmark and Australia in apprentice numbers. Meanwhile, business owners say they cannot recruit qualified talent. Skills gaps could cost the average UK SME up to £318,000 over the next five years, according to research by recruiter Robert Half.

"There's an assumption among smaller businesses about apprentices taking time to get up to speed," says Lizzie Crowley, skills policy advisor for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). "It's true it's likely to be six months before benefits are felt. But evidence shows that productivity increases and retention rates improve. Business owners' fears about the



bureaucracy involved are often more myth than reality."

Anthony Impey, founder of London-based IT and telecoms business Optimity, believes business owners not hiring apprentices are missing a trick. As much as 10% of his 60-strong workforce has come through the apprenticeship route. "It's hard to find highly skilled, affordable candidates in tech, so we develop talent in-house. Apprentices make loyal, skilled employees who have a positive impact on the whole team. They give us a competitive advantage," he says.

Small firms rely strongly on on-the-job training, particularly for younger recruits. More than nine out of 10 apprenticeships offered by small companies are held by 16- to 24-year-olds, according to research from the Federation of Small Businesses. But the introduction of an apprenticeship levy in 2017, which changed the way the training schemes are funded, has resulted in a growth in higher level apprenticeships.

The levy was intended to boost employer investment in training and improve apprenticeship standards. A goal was set to achieve 3m apprenticeships by 2020. In fact, apprenticeship starts have fallen by a fifth since the levy was introduced, according to the Learning and Work Institute. This is because more expensive higher and degree level apprenticeships are being undertaken, often by

older or existing employees rather than young people starting out. Critics predict the apprenticeship budget will be overspent this year as a result.

One specific gripe about the levy among small business owners is the requirement for 20% of training to take place away from the workplace. SME bosses also complain valuable management time is taken up by the apprenticeship process, while paying for the apprentice and finding the right training provider are further headaches.

However, about three out of four employers say improved productivity, better quality of product or service and higher staff morale were all effects of hiring apprentices, government research shows. Developing skills relevant to their organisation was the most commonly cited advantage.

Impey, who is also the FSB's chair on apprenticeships, feels many business owners still labour under misconceptions about what hiring apprentices involves. "Apprentices do take an investment of time, but the benefits far outweigh that. And they needn't be young recruits straight out of school. It could be existing staff or a way of training up your senior management team. You need an induction programme, but that's part of being a good employer. Small businesses that engage with the apprenticeship system love it because they see a huge return on their investment."

▲ Skills gaps could cost the average UK SME up £318,000 over the next five years - training up young talent should therefore be a priority

PHOTOGRAPH: STOCKSY

**It's hard to find affordable candidates in tech, so we develop in-house talent. Apprentices give us an advantage**

**Anthony Impey**  
Founder, Optimity

**Explainer**  
**Apprenticeships**
**What are they?**

An apprenticeship is a training programme for those aged 16 or over, combining hands-on paid work with the chance to learn and earn qualifications. In theory, anyone can become an apprentice, as there is no maximum age limit for applying.

**How long do they take?**

They take at least 12 months to complete, but can last up to six years. This depends on the apprenticeship chosen, the level it is at and the previous experience of the apprentice. The minimum apprenticeship contract is 30 hours a week with at least four hours of paid time given over to education either at a college or via work-based learning.

**How much can you earn?**

People under 19 and those over 19 who are in the first year of their apprenticeship are entitled to the apprentice pay rate of £3.90 an hour. Once that first year is completed, they are entitled to be paid the UK minimum wage appropriate to their age.

**What are the levels?**

- Level 2 (Intermediate) - equivalent to GCSE qualifications.
- Level 3 (Advanced) - equivalent to A levels.
- Level 4 (Higher) - equivalent to a foundation degree.
- Level 5 (Higher) - equivalent to a foundation degree.
- Level 6 (Degree) - equivalent to a bachelor's degree.
- Level 7 (Degree) - equivalent to a master's degree.

**How are they structured?**

Apprentices are entitled to at least 20% of their time spent in off-the-job training either at college, university or with a training provider. They are designed to be flexible. Employers may offer the highest level of apprenticeship without necessarily giving the apprentice the option of gaining a degree qualification.

**Who pays for them?**

Businesses with a payroll of more than £3m pay a tax of 0.5% of their pay bill. Firms below that threshold pay 5% of training costs and the government covers the rest. Companies with fewer than 50 employees have all costs paid if they hire 16- to 18-year-olds, those aged 19 to 24 who have been in care, or under-25s with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

**Where can I find out more?**

The government has a guide to help employers at [hireanapprentice.campaign.gov.uk](http://hireanapprentice.campaign.gov.uk) or call its helpline on 0808 239 7336.

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY; STOCKSY

# Autism to ADHD

## Thinking differently about recruitment

Despite having much to offer, neurodiverse people can struggle to land a job. Some firms are now looking at new ways to tap into their talents

**Georgina Fuller**

The term "diversity and inclusion" has become ubiquitous in the corporate world yet neurodiverse people – those with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia or dyslexia – are often overlooked.

One in seven people are "neurodivergent", according to ACAS. Despite this, a recent study by the CIPD found that seven in 10 businesses ignored their own neurodiversity policy.

Emma O'Leary, who oversees the programme, says: "To attract

Neurodiverse people can, however, often bring a dazzling array of skills and an alternative perspective to the workplace.

Those with ADHD, for example, could have the ability to "hyper focus" and excel when working to tight deadlines. People with autistic spectrum disorder may have the ability to concentrate for long periods of time and be supremely reliable. And those with dyslexia might have strong verbal skills.

Some employers have realised that standard recruitment methods, such as panel interviews, might not work as well for neurodiverse people: Ernst and Young, BT and Siemens all have programmes for neurodivergent employees.

Consumer goods giant P&G has recently launched an apprenticeship programme in conjunction with the National Autistic Society (NAS) for its innovation sector.

Emma O'Leary, who oversees the programme, says: "To attract



**'Most autistic people are desperate to find a job that reflects their talents but the recruitment process, is a huge barrier'**

**Emma Kearns**  
National Autistic Society

Liz Johnson, co-founder of The Ability People, a disability inclusion consultancy, says there are a number of measures employers can take to make apprenticeship schemes more accessible. "They include: training interviewers to allow neurodiverse candidates to perform at their best; eliminating jargon in job descriptions; explicitly stating you welcome neurodiverse candidates; and completing desk assessments for new joiners, so they don't experience sensory overload."

Having a more neurodiverse workforce can help employers reflect the different needs and outlooks of their customers, Johnson adds. "The extra insight they gain will help them adapt their products so they best serve the needs of their whole customer base."

Emma Kearns, head of Enterprise and Employment at the NAS points out that only 16% of autistic people are currently estimated to be in full-time employment. "Most autistic people are desperate to find a job that reflects their talents but the recruitment process, with unpredictable questions, is often a huge barrier."

While the programme focuses on those with autism, P&G encourages anyone with a neurodivergent condition to apply.

"So far, between the UK and Boston, P&G have had more than 50 people attend the assessment day, and 11 employees progressing on to internships," O'Leary says.

different thinkers, your approach needs to be different. The traditional method of verbal-based interviews is very limiting if social communication is a challenge."

Ultimately, says Johnson, employers need to realise that failing to recruit and include neurodiverse people can mean missing out on new ways of thinking and untapped talent. "And in the incredibly competitive world of business this isn't something any company can afford to miss out on."



## Training at top firms

### What the big beasts of business have to offer

Some of the largest companies operating in the UK know the advantage of training apprentices – we take a look at what's available

**Seb Murray**

Whether it's creating a premium retail experience or working on aircraft, apprenticeships can be found in almost every industry and some of the nation's most prestigious companies are investing in young people with such schemes. Here, we take a look at some of the largest organisations offering apprenticeships.

**Jaguar Land Rover**  
The carmaker offers apprenticeships in roles including vehicle sales or service technician. The programmes last between one and three years.

**BAE Systems**  
The defence company employs some 2,000 apprentices on 25

different apprenticeships, ranging from aircraft maintenance to project management.

**PwC**

The professional service firm runs degree apprenticeships in accounting, business, computer science, data science or software engineering. Students earn a bachelor's level degree.

**Army**

The Army runs apprenticeships in a wide array of areas, from engineering to animal care, that fit around a candidate's military training. Apprentices can gain bachelor's and master's degrees.

**Marks & Spencer**

The retailer runs an 18-month apprenticeship in retail management, offering a route to commercial manager. There's also a buying and merchandising apprenticeship that pays a £20,000 salary.

**GCHQ**

The spy agency runs a three-year cybersecurity degree apprenticeship that pays a £18,920 annual salary. Candidates develop advanced digital skills. There's also a software engineering degree apprenticeship in Manchester.

**BT**

The company has a plethora of apprenticeships ranging from

# Professional roles

## Get a well-paying job, but forget uni debt

If you're looking to enter an elite profession such as banking, insurance or law, going to university isn't the only route to a top career

**Seb Murray**

When Emily Binge finished A-levels at Pendleton sixth form college in Salford, she did not follow many of her friends who flocked to university. The 21-year-old was in part deterred by the debt she would incur, with undergraduates expected to owe an average of £50,800, according to the IFS. So she chose an apprenticeship at insurance giant Axa.

"It was a no-brainer," Binge says of the underwriting apprenticeship she started in 2016, evaluating and pricing risk in Bolton. "I'm not stuck with debt. I'm earning money and gaining hands-on experience." She is also earning professional qualifications from the Chartered Insurance Institute.

Apprenticeships offer abundant avenues into elite professions. School-leavers can skip university and train to become a banker, paralegal or software developer through an apprenticeship.

Many employers now offer the best of both worlds: degree apprenticeships that combine university study with on-the-job learning. In 2017, Morrisons teamed up with the University of Bradford and Sheffield Hallam University to create four degree apprenticeships in retail, logistics, manufacturing, and construction.

Civil Service apprentices can progress fast. Those with A-levels earn about £23,000 initially. Within a decade they could manage a team and earn around £50,000 working in government departments, bodies or agencies such as HMRC. "We offer mentoring and coaching and the chance to move between departments to learn and grow," says Jacqui Toogood, interim deputy director of early talent.

But competition for places on top schemes can be intense: Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer hires just a handful of paralegal apprentices each year. Olivia Balson, director of the law firm's service centre, recommends showcasing soft skills such as communication, as legal knowledge is gained on the apprenticeship.

She also encourages people to apply: "We want to open up access to the legal profession beyond those who can afford to go to university."

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Apprentice



**'To serve our customers best we need people in the workforce who are replicas of our customers'**

**Emma Austen**  
Axa

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## Build Tomorrow Together

▼ Between 2014/15 and 2017/18 the number of GCSE-equivalent apprenticeship starts nearly halved.  
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY; STOCKSY

# Apprentice levy

## A funding model in need of change

With some companies using the levy to fund MBAs, are young job-seekers missing out?

**Seb Murray**

**A**pprenticeships are a rewarding way for school-leavers to forge a prosperous career, but the system that funds them in England is under scrutiny.

A damning report published by the EDSK thinktank recently claimed organisations are abusing the system: spending hundreds of millions of pounds on "fake" apprenticeships - relabelled courses, including MBAs for chief executives.

Introduced in April 2017, the apprenticeship levy makes large organisations set aside 0.5% of their payroll for apprenticeships. But an explosion in the number of pricey, high-level apprenticeships for people already in work is draining the apprenticeship budget and could "crowd out" youngsters, according to the Resolution Foundation.

The number of GCSE-equivalent apprenticeship starts nearly halved between 2014/15 and 2017/18, from 298,000 to 161,000. The number of apprenticeship starts equivalent to bachelor's degrees and above more than doubled, from 20,000 to 48,000. Over 25s accounted for 65% of these higher-level apprenticeship starts and the majority were already employed, the Resolution Foundation said.

Employers rebranded existing training courses as apprenticeships to "avoid losing money" they paid into the levy, says Tom Richmond, director of the EDSK thinktank: unspent funds are lost after 24 months. Some £11m of unspent funds expired in May 2019, the first month of the expiry process.

Small businesses do not pay the levy, but can draw on the money if they pay for 5% of training costs, with the government covering the remaining 95%, up to the funding band maximum. But thousands of small firms cannot access training because of a funding shortfall, according to the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

Employers and training providers are calling for the levy to be reformed, because it is not running smoothly. There were 393,400 apprenticeship starts in 2018/19, up 5% on the year before but down significantly from the 564,800 starts prior to the levy's introduction.

What's more, 45% of 510 firms surveyed recently by accounting firm Grant Thornton had not spent a penny of the money they had paid into the levy so far.

But for other employers, apprenticeships are a boon. The insurer Axa spends nearly all of its levy pot, says Emma Austen, head of professional qualifications. "The levy is a fantastic way to develop our staff," she says. "All of our apprentices are in permanent roles that fill a business need and further their learning. Most people stay with us after the apprenticeship."

Dan Richards, UK and Ireland recruitment director at professional services firm EY, is also bullish on apprenticeships. "Apprenticeships are one way to increase entry routes into the profession. They have helped us to diversify the talent that we attract," he says.

But to improve the system, Richmond calls for a new definition of an "apprenticeship", benchmarked against systems in other countries, and only applicable to level 3 courses, equivalent to A-levels. He also wants ringfenced apprenticeship funding for 16- to 18-year-olds; training courses for low-skilled jobs like pouring pints to be scrapped; and degree apprenticeships excluded from levy funding.

However, Neil Carberry, chief executive of the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, wants looser, not tighter, funding rules. "The apprenticeship levy should be a 'skills levy' that companies can draw down upon to fund whatever training is work-relevant, meets their workforce needs and is regulated by Ofqual," he says.

Joe Fitzsimons, head of education and skills at the Institute of Directors, also wants government funding to cover an apprentice's wages while they train for at least 20% of their time off-the-job. "This is a real sticking point for organisations, as it's a large cost to cover."

With a huge hole in the apprenticeship budget, the government seems likely to make some reforms to the levy. But it remains to be seen what form that will take.

**The apprenticeship levy should be a "skills levy" that companies can use to fund whatever training is relevant'**

**Neil Carberry**  
REC



### In numbers

#### Is it time to review the levy?

The apprenticeship levy was introduced to fund training for young workers but, three years on, the scheme is in danger of failing those it was set up to help as much of the money has been diverted to older workers



How much are we talking?

**£3.4bn**

The tax to pay for apprenticeships raised about £2.7bn in the first year, with this figure mooted to rise to £3.4bn by 2023/24. But in March 2019, the National Audit Office, a watchdog, warned that the levy pot is running dry.

What's changed?

**5%**

Since the levy's introduction, there has been a five percentage point drop in the proportion of young people starting an apprenticeship.

Sources: EDSK; National Audit Office

Where is it being spent?

**13%**

The levy led to the proliferation of costly, high-level training and a decline in low-level courses. In 2017/18, nearly 13% of apprenticeship starts were at level 4 or above (degree or higher equivalent), compared with around 5% in 2015/16.

Who is benefiting?

**66%**

In the past two years, 66% of high-level apprenticeship programmes were started by workers aged 25 or above.

Why is this a problem?

**£9,000**

Level 4 or above courses tend to be more expensive to put on. The NAO said the average cost of a levy-funded apprenticeship is £9,000 - double the government's initial estimation, raising concerns over the financial viability of the levy.

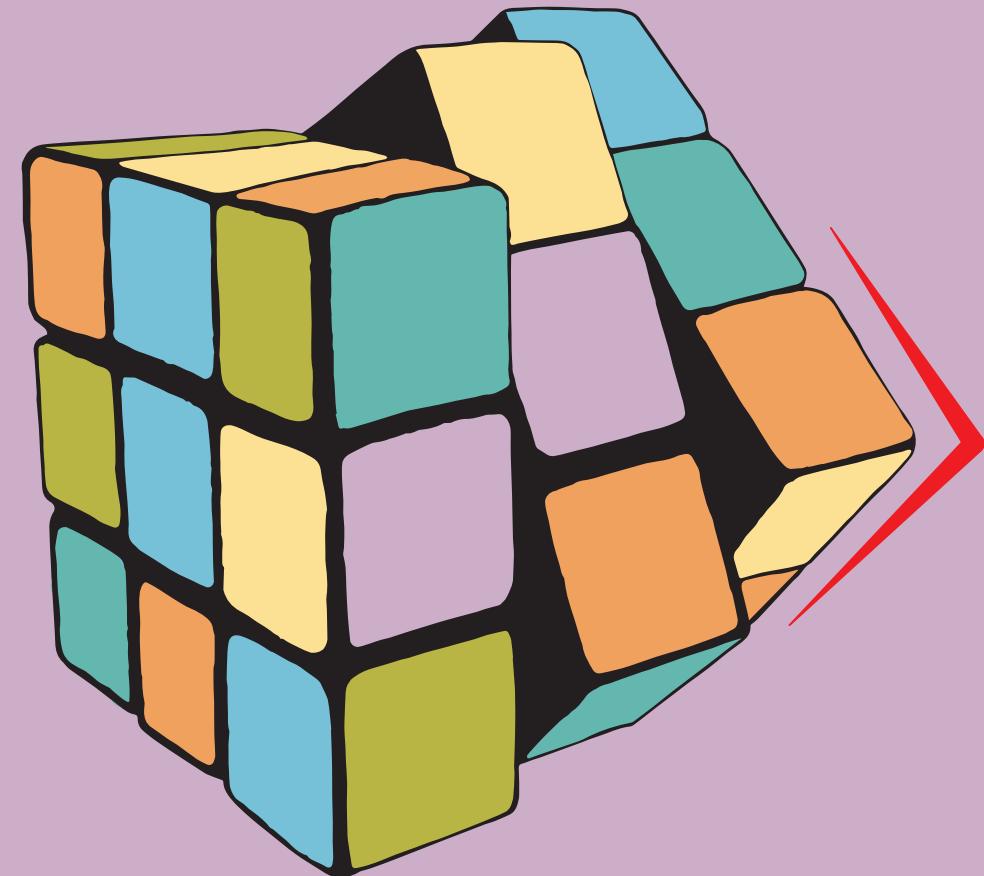
Who is missing out?

**46%**

Of all apprentices, 46% were with their employer for at least six months before starting their course, raising questions over whether the levy is helping enough young people to launch a career.



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**Comment**  
Mark Horsley



*As CEO, starting out as an apprentice in my industry taught me what drives people*

I went to a grammar school but I wasn't really into the academic scene back then. As a teenager, I was more interested in tinkering with cars, to be honest. I couldn't ever see myself in an office job, which is why I applied for an apprenticeship. I figured it would teach me something practical. I applied to various companies and eventually landed a position as a cable jointer with the North Eastern Electricity Board in York.

I've got to say, I absolutely loved it. I was out digging holes and doing cable repairs for the first 10 years of my working life. Starting out at the coalface taught me how people think, what drives them. The older I get, the more I have become aware that everything ultimately comes down to people. In business, the better you are with people, the better your company will be.

I am not against further education by any means. We have many outstanding university graduates at Northern Gas Networks, where I am now chief executive. But it's difficult to appreciate what it's like to work through the night in awful weather unless you've done it yourself. It gives you a real emotional connection with others.

Apprenticeships are very different today compared with when I did mine back in the 1970s. We run a modular three-year course, which allows our apprentices to become craftspeople and then move into different areas of the business.

I think as well that any stigma there might once have been around apprenticeships has disappeared completely now. In fact, my youngest daughter is just finishing college and she is thinking about applying for an apprenticeship, which I think is great.

One of the first steps I took as CEO was to extend the age limit for our apprentices up to 30. We have employed a number of skilled ex-army forces colleagues this way. Over the last few years, we have really modernised our workforce and many employees started with us as apprentices.

Our age demographic has also changed dramatically, with more than half of our workforce now aged 40 or under. A significant proportion of our senior management is made up of former apprentices as well.

As a chief executive, one of the most valuable lessons that I can draw on from my apprenticeship past is the ability to embrace change. Our industry is undergoing a major transformation as we prepare for a low-carbon future and progress the decarbonisation of heat to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Having worked in many different roles over the years across a wide range of disciplines and levels has also taught me to look at the wider landscape. So one of the things I have been pushing hard for is hydrogen as an alternative fuel, for example – and this was a long while before the UK government's net-zero target for 2050, I should add.

It would be good to see more businesses getting on board. Companies without an apprenticeship programme are really missing out. You need people from all backgrounds to make a great team. Plus, there are plenty of people who don't have a degree but have skills from other areas of their life that can be incredibly valuable to a successful, modern and dynamic business.

Mark Horsley is chief executive of Northern Gas Networks. He undertook a four-year apprenticeship as a cable jointer at North Eastern Electricity Board from 1975-1979.

# Northern Ireland

## How apprentices underpin Belfast's fintech boom

Brought in to address a skills gap in science and tech, many sectors now offer apprenticeships

Heidi Scrimgeour

**N**orthern Ireland might not typically be considered a trailblazer – with the smallest population of the four devolved nations, its economy trundles behind the UK average – but when it comes to apprenticeships, the region is a leading light.

"There may have been a sense in the past of Northern Ireland lagging behind the rest of the UK economically in terms of business growth and innovation, but today it's an exciting place to be for commercial development and investment," says Richard Kirk, director of Workplus, a partnership approach between employers, the Department for Education, further education colleges and Ulster University.

The Belfast-based business has helped almost 100 apprentices find work in Northern Ireland, and this year that figure is set to double.

Belfast is currently a leading city in Europe for new software

development and, according to the Department for International Trade last year, the world's number one destination for fintech development projects. But with such growth comes challenges – namely how to meet demand for skilled workers.

Although Northern Irish employers have only been actively exploring apprenticeships beyond A-level since 2014, when the Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships was published, local businesses increasingly recognise the value of apprenticeships in meeting demand for future talent.

Workplus was initially established to address the skills gap in the STEM sector in Northern Ireland, but employers of all kinds now offer a range of apprenticeship options from GCSE to master's degree level. Apprentices learn on the job, with tuition fees covered and mentoring and support provided. The attrition

rate is low, with 95% of those who began the Workplus programme still on board. "In the general workforce, employers are used to an attrition of 15%," says Kirk. "Apprentices are three times more likely to stick around."

The figures are also impressive

compared with the attrition rate for undergraduate degree courses, which saw drop-out rates go up for the third year in a row in 2018.

Apprenticeships are available across a diverse range of activities, from repair and construction associated with historic buildings, to nature conservation skills to tackle loss of biodiversity and the climate crisis.

Across the UK, all projects funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund must be able to demonstrate

that a wide range of people will benefit, and one way projects have achieved this is by offering opportunities for skills training to apprentices.

One forthcoming apprenticeship opportunity relates to a heritage project at the former entrance block of Enniskillen Workhouse, County Fermanagh. Major repair and conservation works will facilitate a dedicated heritage skills and education programme, in which more than 100 local craftspeople and contractors will benefit from accredited training in heritage skills, with 12 NVQ Level 3 apprenticeships being created.

Richard Kirk  
Director, Workplus

***In the workforce, employers are used to an attrition of 15%. Apprentices are three times more likely to stick around'***



▲ In Belfast, one firm has helped almost 100 apprentices find work in Northern Ireland; this year that number is set to double

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



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▼ An interest in electrical engineering led Evie Hammond to apply for an instrumentation apprenticeship  
PHOTOGRAPH: EDWARD MOSS

## Gender equality

### More women now visible in jobs 'for the boys'

Industries that have been traditionally dominated by male workers are making a concerted effort to attract more women into their workforces, but are they going far enough?

By Ellen Manning

**A**n apprenticeship is daunting for anyone. But what about when you're a woman about to enter a sector that's stereotypically male-dominated? According to government figures, 49% of apprenticeship starts in 2017/18 were by women and 51% by men - the first time that more apprenticeships had been started by men than women since 2009/10. That may sound like it isn't an issue, but that's not the whole picture. A report in 2017 by the Young Women's Trust not only highlighted that male apprentices

earned more than women - £7.25 vs £6.67 per hour - but women apprentices are also focused in relatively few sectors. "In key sectors such as engineering men outnumber women 25 to one," it warned.

It's a situation Evie Hammond, in her third year of an apprenticeship as an instrumentation, control and automation (ICA) engineer at Severn Trent, witnessed first-hand. The 21-year-old, from Coleshill, West Midlands, had taken A-levels but decided university wasn't for her. Her interest in electrical engineering led her to apply for an instrumentation apprenticeship at Severn Trent but it was only when she got to the group assessment stage that the reality of being a woman hit her. "I expected going into engineering it would be male-dominated but I didn't realise quite how male-dominated it would be."

Hammond, who did her training at the Make UK Technology Hub, said: "I'm the only girl on the teams I'm in but they don't treat me any differently. Some of the jobs are physically challenging, but I get the same chances as everyone else." She may be accepted at work but admits she encounters raised eyebrows when people hear she works at a sewage treatment works. "I've had it before when I say: 'I'm an engineer', and I'm told: 'No you're not, you're female.'"

She's not alone. When Tia Boulton-Crowe, 21, from Staffordshire, embarked on an apprenticeship in land-based technology, including working with farm machinery, not everyone was accepting. "There was a lot of judgment before people really knew who I was and what I knew. It was only the minority and once I proved myself I gained so much respect."

Of course, there are physical challenges too - something maritime apprentice Stacy Gregory experienced. Her chosen industry is no stranger to gender imbalance, with 2% of seafarer positions held by women. Gregory, who recently graduated from P&O Ferries' Apprenticeship scheme, says: "There was a lot of manual handling involved, which was a bit of a struggle, like pulling heavy ropes along decks and throwing heaving lines. I definitely feel you have to prove yourself more as a woman in a male-dominated industry. I just had to get stuck in."

Getting stuck in is exactly what got welder Chloe Sales, 24, from Staffordshire, her apprenticeship in the first place. Sales, who was named Stem Apprentice of the Year by Stoke-on-Trent College - where she was the only apprentice female welder - earlier this year, says: "I was working in a warehouse and they were short on welders so I said: 'Will you let me have a go?'" She enjoyed it so much she planned to put herself through a college course - prompting her then-employer to offer her an apprenticeship. For her, the fear is that being a woman will mean she's treated differently. "When I first started I think they were nice to me because I was a girl but when I'd been there a few months I said: 'Give me some of the rubbish jobs!'"

It's clearly possible for women to take on roles in male-dominated areas, but could it be easier? The Young Women's Trust report called for the government to consider additional payments for employers recruiting women apprentices in male-dominated sectors and said employers should make "greater use of positive action", including setting



▲ Award-winning apprentice welder Chloe Sales displaying her skills



◀ Stacy Gregory, left, a recent graduate from P&O's apprenticeship scheme, works in an industry where only 5% of seafarers are female

**I'm the only girl on the teams I'm in but they don't treat me any differently. I get the same chances as everyone else'**

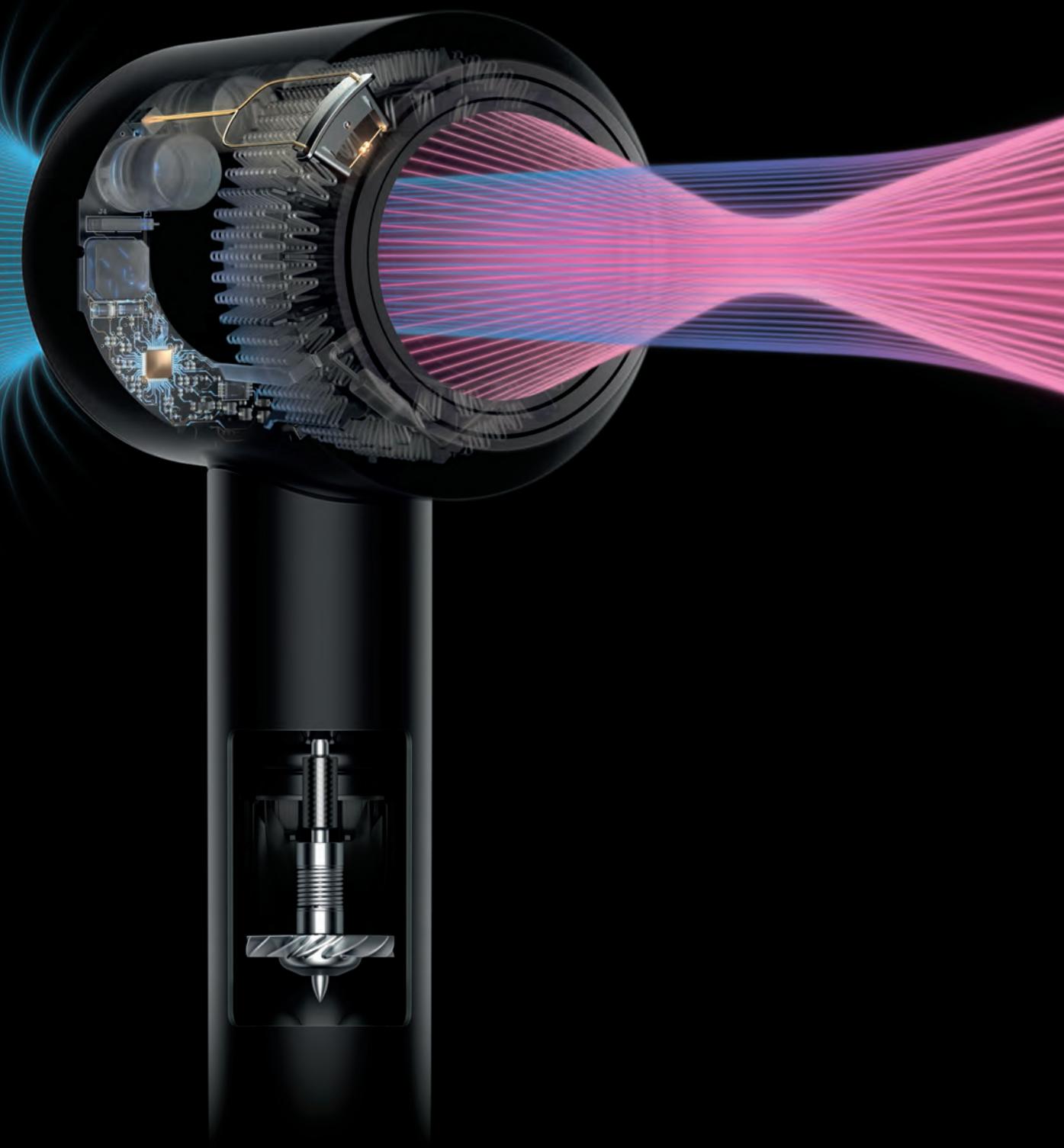
Evie Hammond  
Severn Trent

targets, reserving places on training courses and adapting language used in job adverts.

One company actively trying to attract more women is Gavia Thamealink Railways (GTR). In the UK, just 5% of Britain's 19,000 train drivers are women - something GTR is trying to change. Its target is that by 2021 at least 40% of applicants for train driver roles will be female and its steps to achieve this include a school outreach programme, all-female assessment centres for trainee drivers and a Women's Network Group that pairs up new female recruits with another woman in the company.

But for some female apprentices success is more dependent on their own mindset rather than external influences. "As a woman in this type of career you have to be able to hold your own, have a good sense of humour, laugh at yourself and definitely be strong willed," says Gregory. Boulton-Crowe agrees. "It was daunting being a female going into a 'man's world' but I learned so much, I became a stronger and more confident individual.

Apprenticeships are a great way to get your foot in the door - you're learning while having a wage and in some cases dropped completely in the deep end, but it's 100% the best way to learn, as scary as it is!"



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▼ Clockwise from left: Hedy Lamarr; Beatrice Shilling; Helen Ochoa  
PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY; GETTY



# Women engineers

## Famous females fixers who helped to win wars and reach for the stars

We take a look at some historic figures who made invaluable contributions to science and technology

### Abby Young-Powell

**H**ow many famous women engineers can you name? Many people might struggle, but there are plenty who changed society for the better. From the Hollywood star who helped invent wifi, to the woman who invented the windscreen wiper, here's our rundown of those who helped shape the world.

Throughout history, there have been women engineers who have saved the day. There was Emily Warren Roebling (1843-1903), for example. She helped construct the towering Brooklyn Bridge in New York City, despite having no formal qualifications, after her husband, who was meant to do it, became ill.

Then there's Beatrice Shilling (1909-1990), nicknamed "Tilly". Shilling was the definition of "badass" before it became an overused term. An electrical engineering graduate from the University of Manchester, she helped win the Battle of Britain when she revolutionised Spitfire and Hurricane RAF fighter planes to better compete against the powerful German Luftwaffe. On top of that she was also the world's fastest woman motorcycle racer.

During the same period, Hollywood film star Hedy Lamarr (1914-2000) unexpectedly became a pioneer in the field of wireless communication. During the war, the film star helped invent a device that facilitated the development of GPS, Bluetooth and wifi.

Another invention we would struggle to live without today is the windscreen wiper. Mary Anderson (1866-1953) invented it after riding in a trolley car in New York City one winter day. She noticed the driver had to put his head out of the window to see and resolved to do something about it. But it wasn't until 2011 that she was inducted into

the National Inventors Hall of Fame in the US.

One of the most famous women engineers, though, is Ada Lovelace (1815-1852). Lovelace was a 19th-century mathematician. She is also known as the world's first computer programmer - 100 years before modern computers were even invented. Lovelace worked on engineer Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine, which is considered to be the first computer.

In more recent years, women engineers have become famous astronauts, such as Ellen Ochoa, who in 1993 became the first Hispanic-heritage woman to go into space, where she served a nine-day mission aboard the space shuttle Discovery.

There have also been high-flyers in tech such as Marissa Mayer, who was the first woman engineer to join Google and then went on to become chief executive of Yahoo. So there you have it. Next time someone asks you how many famous women engineers you know, you can run them through the list. And if you're on the way to becoming an engineer yourself, know you'll be following in their footsteps.

### Experience

**'The apprenticeship hasn't just boosted my career, it's changed who I am'**

Emily Clark, 19, is a civil engineering apprentice. She works at PD Ports four days a week and studies at Teesside University one day a week

#### Abby Young-Powell

After doing an internship at PD Ports, I knew I wanted to be a civil engineer and luckily they offered me an apprenticeship. I get to work on lots of different projects. For example, one day I might do a structural inspection of a waterside quay. This means getting on a survey boat and going underneath the quay to look at it. We also work on warehouses and roadways. But one of my favourite things to do is office refurbishments, because I get to work closely with people to find out how they want their office to look.

I don't work with any other apprentices, but I have a good group of friends at university who are all on the same career path as me. I still live at home with my parents, but I'm saving up to move out.

Before I started, I didn't realise I'd be able to get out on site as much as I am and that I'd work with so many

different people, such as designers or people in construction. The people are lovely. I have a mentor and he guides me all the way. I speak to him on a daily basis and can go to him with any problems and he'll help me the best he can.

I only wish I'd known about apprenticeships, and the opportunities they bring, earlier. My main advice would be that if you get a chance to do an apprenticeship, you should jump at it. If you'd told me two years ago that I'd be as confident as I am now, I would probably have laughed at you. The apprenticeship hasn't just boosted my career, it's changed who I am and has given me new skills, confidence, and experience. Now I plan to keep working until I become a professionally qualified engineer.

*If you'd told me two years ago that I'd be as confident as I am now, I would probably have laughed at you'*

Emily Clark  
Apprentice civil engineer



▲ Emily Clark at work among the cranes and freight at Teesport, Middlesbrough  
PHOTOGRAPH: JOANNE CRAWFORD

# Horticulture

## The UK growers tackling a skills shortage from the ground up

For a £9bn industry that can struggle to recruit talented young workers, apprenticeships are vital to many in the sector

### Heidi Scrimgeour

**G**reen skills are in alarming decline in Britain, according to the director general of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Despite the horticulture industry contributing about £9bn to the UK economy and employing around 300,000 people, 70% of businesses in the sector say they struggle to fill vacancies and 83% put this down to the poor perception of horticulture in schools and colleges, according to the RHS.

But at the foot of the South Downs in East Sussex, one institute has found a way to combat the skills crisis by connecting young people with horticulture in new



**'Apprentices can bring new ideas and ways of working that we won't have thought about'**

Alex Waterford  
Plumpton College

and inspiring ways. Established in 1919, Plumpton College is one of the leading centres for land-based education in the UK and offers courses in everything from floristry to animal management and outdoor adventure.

For Alex Waterford, Plumpton's grounds and garden manager,

the college also represents the

culmination of a professional

journey that began before he left

school. Having studied horticulture at Plumpton College before working as a garden designer and running his own garden design and landscaping business for 12 years, he saw his current role advertised while working for the National Trust, and his working life came full circle.

"I did work experience at Stanmer Park aged 15, back when it was the plant sales base for the parks and gardens department of Brighton & Hove council," he explains.

"Now I'm project managing the horticultural aspect of Plumpton College and the Stanmer Park Restoration Project."

Stanmer Park's historic Walled Garden is the site of a £5.1m project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which Plumpton College and Brighton & Hove city council have helped bring to life. Within the walled garden there will be a cafe, farm shop and events lawns suitable for plant fairs, farmers' markets or open air theatre. Waterford works closely with the college's horticulture apprentices, who will be actively involved in planting the Walled Garden, designed by Dominic Cole.

Walled garden horticultural projects aren't uncommon, but Stanmer Park is the only one of its kind tied to an educational establishment. For the apprentices involved, it's a truly unusual opportunity, and the chance to work in two different environments - the Walled Garden and Plumpton College itself - is invaluable for an apprentice wondering which career path to pursue.

"The opportunity to experience this kind of visitor attraction before it opens is brilliant for anyone hoping to work in public gardens - plants which apprentices grow from seed will be produced to a level suitable for sales in the plant

sales area, meaning apprentices will learn the commercial aspect of horticulture, too," he says.

But the apprentices aren't the only ones learning new skills; their presence on site at Plumpton has boosted the team as a whole.

"You're always learning something and you never know everything in horticulture, so having apprentices doing up-to-the-minute training helps us all revise things or uncover things we haven't studied," Waterford says. "Having a fresh set of eyes on a project lifts everyone. Apprentices can bring new ideas and ways of working that we won't have thought of."

Waterford is evangelical about the benefits for the apprentices, too. "Adjusting to the world of work is a big shock to the system

▲ Apprentice Kate Nannery at work at Plumpton College: 'It's the kind of opportunity that doesn't come about very often'

PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON WELLER

for some college-leavers, whereas an apprenticeship gets you used to a working day and helps you understand what future employers might expect," he says. "And as an employer, taking on an experienced, qualified apprentice is very different to taking on someone straight out of a classroom who'll you have to train from scratch."

Gary Swayne is group safety, health and environment manager at APS Produce, the UK's largest tomato grower, which produces millions of punnets of tomatoes per week from six growing sites. A beneficiary of lifelong learning himself, Swayne sees apprenticeships as "vital" to the future of the horticulture industry.

"Apprenticeships make it so much easier for operational managers to invest in people," he says. "Despite

Nature-lover Kate Nannery decided to follow her passion and is now an apprentice at Plumpton College

### Heidi Scrimgeour

I've had a passion for horticulture for as long as I can remember. My parents took me to gardens and flower shows from a young age, but I hadn't considered a career in horticulture until I discovered the apprenticeship opportunity at Plumpton College.

I had a job in marketing, writing about interior design and architecture. I ended up working for an interior designer who specialised in biophilic design, which is all about incorporating the love of nature into interior spaces. It really piqued my interest. I started thinking that what I really wanted to do was create those kinds of spaces instead of write about them.

I did some online research and came across Plumpton College, and

**'I really value getting on-the-job practical experience, which I know is what employers look for'**

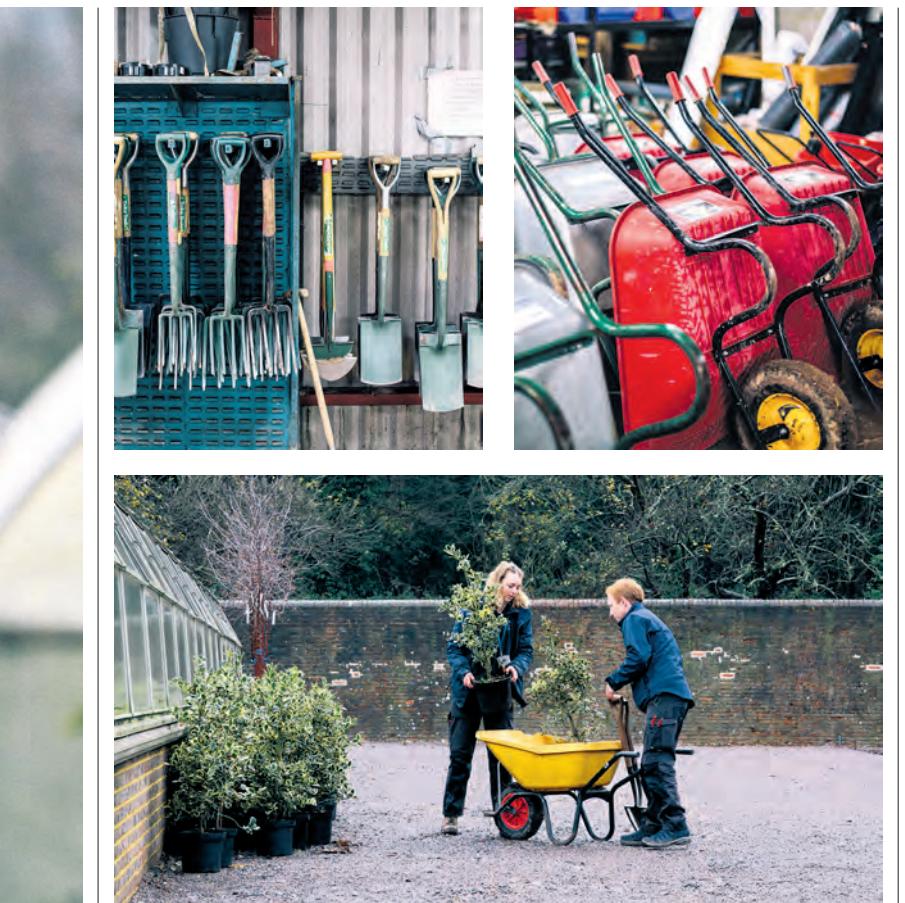
Kate Nannery  
Level 2 apprentice

the size of our industry, it's not one people know about, so we're able to use apprenticeships as a bridging qualification for people with prior learning, bringing that level of talent into the specialisms we require within commercial crop production."

Waterford agrees. "An apprenticeship also represents a valuable opportunity to train someone up, at little cost to the employer beyond your time, to become a vital member of your future team," he says. "I've heard of apprentices being treated like labourers, but you have to give them more than that. An apprentice's wages aren't fantastic, so they're essentially making a sacrifice for you. As an employer, it's only right that you do the same and invest wholeheartedly in an apprentice."

Don't be afraid to take the plunge if you're thinking of becoming an apprentice. I loved my old job but, without sounding too cheesy, I feel I've found my home in horticulture. This is what I really want to do with my life, and I can see my future within it.

Who knows, maybe I'll be the next Charlie Dimmock.



### Experience

## 'I've found my home in horticulture. This is what I really want to do with my life'

### Commentary Charlie Dimmock

*'Being an apprentice helps you grow up. It really helps prepare you for the real world'*

I started my career with a Saturday job at a garden centre. I was studying for A-levels but I hated college, so I dropped out - which went down like a lead balloon with my parents. I went to work at the garden centre full time over the summer.

By the end of the summer I realised I probably ought to do some training. It was that wonderful thing of being a teenager and feeling like you know everything then having to eat humble pie.

This time, though, I did day release while continuing to work at the garden centre. I went to Sparsholt College, which was mainly agricultural at the time, with a little bit of horticulture. Nowadays they do absolutely everything from beekeeping to floristry.

It wasn't a formal apprenticeship, but working while studying via day release was so different from the boring formality of A-level college. I used to cycle seven miles in and out to work and I earned my own money - £32.50 a week! I relished my independence.

A garden centre is a lovely environment to work in. People are glad to be there, focusing on something they enjoy. It suited me so much better than college. You still get told what to do at work but it's nothing like college tutors telling you what to do.

I mixed with people of all ages and outlooks. I think being an apprentice helps you grow up in terms of your confidence and social skills. It really helps prepare you for the real world. There's no getting your mum to phone up and say you're sick or not doing the work. You had to do it and that was it, otherwise you got a flea in your ear. It's a bit more serious than a teacher telling you off.

While I was there, the lecturers kept mentioning horticultural colleges so I applied to Cannington College and studied there for three years. I was fortunate that my placement year was at Chelsea Physic Garden. Living in London at 19 was wonderful.

Then, I went backpacking around New Zealand. I worked as a check-in clerk for Air New Zealand. It was fun, but the experience convinced me I didn't want to work in an office.

When I came home, I went back to work at the garden centre as a horticulturist responsible for nursery stock. I took part in some filming for a TV programme called Grass Roots and, out of the blue, I got a phone call asking me to do a screen test for Ground Force. I went on to present it for about eight years. It was just one of those unexpected things. I had intended to take over running the garden centre when my boss retired, but I ended up having to leave once my TV career took off.

The garden centre doesn't actually exist anymore. These days I'm working on various media projects and I've just done series five of Garden Rescue for BBC One.

I'm still as excited as ever about instilling a passion for gardening in people. When I started out, only people over 45 were into gardening but young people today understand that being out in the garden is good for you. Nearly everyone who writes in wants a garden that's good for the wildlife, too.

There's a lot of pressure on young people to go to university and a sense that you'll be missing out if you don't. But that's not the only way to study. Parents, try not to freak out if your son or daughter doesn't want to go to college. There are so many other possible paths to a career that makes you happy.

Charlie Dimmock was speaking to Heidi Scrimgeour



# Advice for parents

## Why a light touch works wonders

When young people choose an apprenticeship over a degree, support at home lets them rise to the challenge

**Heidi Scrimgeour**

**W**hoever said parenting “gets easier” clearly hadn’t factored in that your child will always be your child, even when they’re a young adult making their own way in the world.

As a parent, there are few things quite as hard as watching your child make decisions about their education or career that could affect the rest of their lives.

But mum-of-one Erica Dean

believes that standing back and letting her daughter, Georgia, make her own decisions has been key to Georgia forging a career path that allows her to flourish.

Georgia, 20, studied business at college. She began applying for apprenticeships in 2017 and is now 18 months into a business apprenticeship with Dixons Carphone.

Erica says she was aware of the opportunities that an apprenticeship would offer her daughter, but she wasn’t prepared for how hard she’d have to work to secure one.

“As a parent, I don’t think you appreciate the hoops your child will have to jump through just to get to the interview stage, or how competitive it can be – they have to complete an online application form and submit a video application before they even make it that far,” she says.

Georgia spent a year applying for apprenticeships and was invited to



**It's tempting to keep snapping at their heels and asking if they've done this or that, but give them space to grow'**

**Erica Dean  
Parent**

Not all parents feel informed about what modern apprenticeships can offer their children. Erica feels going to college rather than staying on at school afforded her daughter more opportunities to explore apprenticeships.

But for parents who have always assumed their son or daughter will go to university, adjusting to life with a young apprentice living at home may be a challenge.

Erica, however, wouldn’t change a thing. “There’s no buying pots and pans and dragging them halfway up the country, and yet Georgia isn’t missing out on the university lifestyle,” she says.

“She completed six weeks of training at Sheffield Hallam University during the first year of her apprenticeship, and she will come out with no debt because she is being paid while she learns and they’re covering her university costs.”

If Erica could offer advice to parents of other would-be apprentices, she’d recommend that they step back.

“Let them make mistakes, because if they mess up their first application, they’ll know by their second one what not to do,” she says.

“It’s tempting to keep snapping at their heels and asking if they’ve done this or that, but give them space to grow and time to complete the application. Trust that in the end, it’ll all be worthwhile.”

# Support

## Help is on hand as you earn and learn

Training providers, senior colleagues and even government funding are all available to apprentices in need of assistance

**Heidi Scrimgeour**

**A**pprenticeships are a route to a successful career, be that for school leavers or career changers. It’s well-documented that you’ll “earn while you learn” and that you’ll have an industry-recognised qualification that could boost your earning power at the end. But how much do you know about the support for apprentices?

Alongside an employer, training providers also work closely with

apprentices, helping to ensure that apprenticeship qualifications are achieved.

At Mencap, a charity for people with learning disabilities, every apprentice with a health condition is provided with a job support coach, funded by the government’s Access to Work fund. The fund pays for support in work, if you have a disability of any kind.

But many employers are unaware of the existence of job support coach funding, or assume it’s only for people with physical disabilities, says Mark Capper, Mencap’s head of development.

“It creates a three way partnership between the learner, the employer and the job coach. It also means the employer doesn’t have to pick up additional support requirements, which means less impact on the business,” he says.

At Kingston Maurward College in Dorset, apprentices are mentored



▼ Apprentices with a disability can access funding for a job support coach  
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

by a person who acts as a “go-to” and liaises between apprentice, employer and teacher to make sure every apprentice has the opportunity for success, explains Kingston Maurward College’s Joanna Jeffery.

“This includes additional support sessions and reviews – which can take place at college or in the workplace – if they’re struggling with a particular topic, haven’t previously carried out a specialist activity, or have been out of the learning environment for a while,” she adds.

The college’s apprentices work with the garden team under the guidance of head gardener Nigel Hewish. They work four days a week on the upkeep of the Grade II-listed gardens, and on the fifth day they join apprentices from across the county for lectures, practical sessions and seminars.

Jeffery points to the work of the arboriculture apprentices, who practise their craft in a number of locations around Dorset. Supported by an apprenticeship coordinator, who has extensive experience in the industry, they can often be found felling trees, or climbing the majestic avenue of beech trees to carry out pest and disease monitoring,” she says.

“We value their enthusiasm and agility and greatly appreciate the contributions the apprentices make to the health of our wonderful trees on the estate.”

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## Nominate someone outstanding today

Thomas Sutherland, who completed his Technical Apprenticeship for Leonardo and now works on the Eurofighter Typhoon Radar integrating current and next-gen systems, was named IET Apprentice of the Year in 2019.

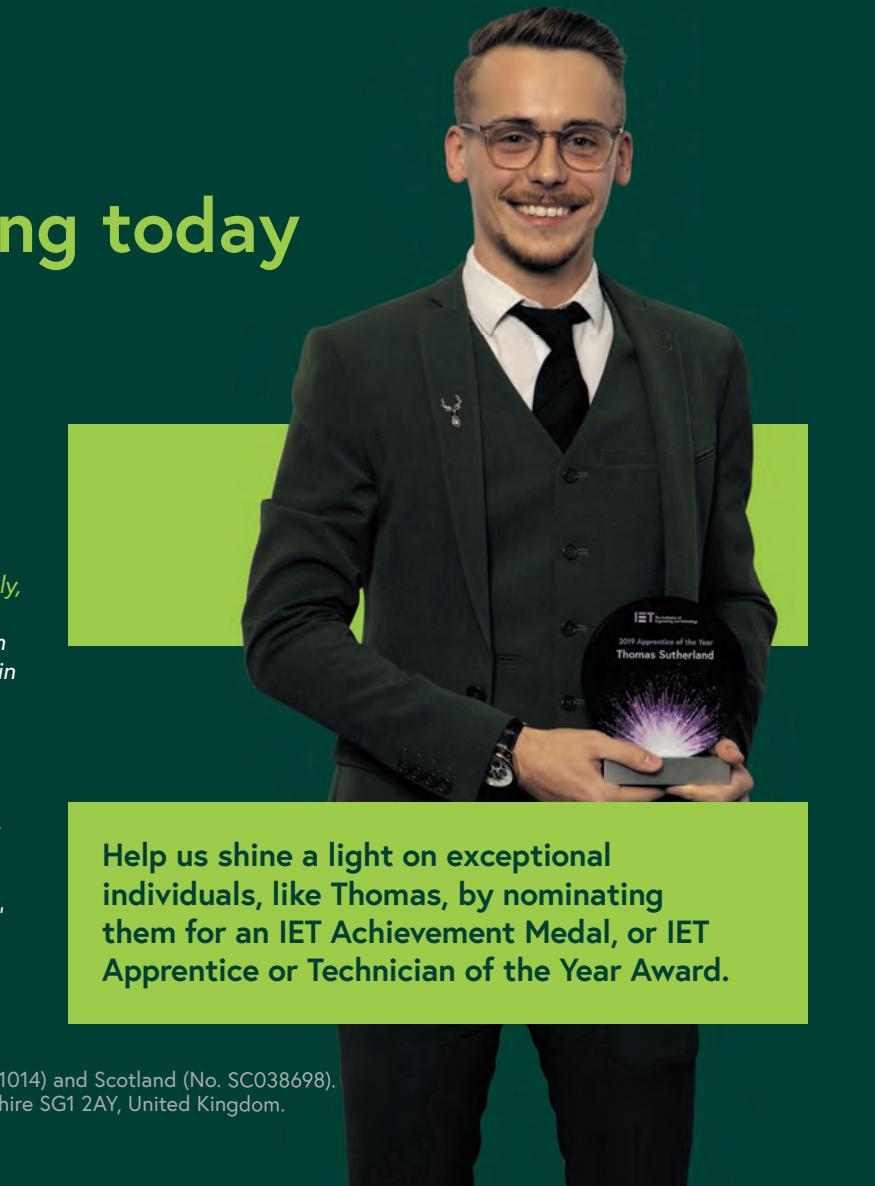
After senior management identified both his technical and leadership talents, Thomas secured sponsorship for university and was placed on a bespoke development plan accelerating him to engineering leadership roles. Talking about his award win, Thomas said:

*"Winning the IET Apprentice of the Year award was a moment I'm sure I'll never forget. It was such a special night shared with some truly remarkable people. I remember reading about the other award recipients and realising how much their impact is apparent in my life through all of the technology I use every day."*

*"Having my name mentioned amongst these people inspired me to continue to push my career forward, as this is really just the start."*

Nominations close  
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*"The award has boosted my career significantly, presenting opportunities I never imagined I would have. The recognition I've received from people I work with and new connections within the industry shows how highly the award is thought of."*

*"Following the win, the IET has given me the opportunity to represent apprentices on a global scale. I want to be an example of what can be achieved by people who have chosen the Apprenticeship pathway and create opportunities for others to develop as I have."*

[theiet.org/achievement](http://theiet.org/achievement)

▼ Up and under: apprenticeships offer trainees hands-on experience  
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

# Motor industry Carmakers call for apprentices who show drive

Young people who want to work with cars have a myriad of options to earn while they learn. They don't need to get their hands dirty, either – finance, service and sales have apprenticeship roles too

Ellen Manning

For petrolheads, opportunities to work with cars, in cars and around cars are extensive. According to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), more than 823,000 people are employed across the automotive industry, including 168,000 directly in manufacturing, while more than 30 manufacturers build in excess of 70 models of vehicle in the UK, dreamed up and created by some of the world's most skilled engineers.

But for most car fanatics, behind the wheel is where they want to be. One option for adrenaline junkies is to become a stunt driver. To do this most candidates go to a stunt driving school then serve as an apprentice in a team, learning from the best and working their way up until they become an expert themselves.

If it's size rather than speed you're after, how about becoming a lorry driver? According to The Knights of Old Group, which offers lorry driver apprenticeships, a national shortfall of 45,000 drivers means you're

But for those who don't want to get their hands dirty, major car companies are also offering apprenticeships relating to other areas of the industry – Ford's apprenticeships include higher apprenticeships in finance and IT, while BMW's include customer service and sales. Ford offers dealer apprenticeship opportunities across everything from car technicians to sales executives, with a range of programmes from 12 months up to three years combining hands-on training with college study.

Such is the popularity of apprenticeships that in 2016 the Automotive Apprenticeship Matching Service was launched by major manufacturers, allowing companies to connect rejected applicants with schemes run by other manufacturers and in turn close a skills gap in the sector.

I thought I knew about cars before I started, but when I got here I realised I still had a lot to learn. That was a bit of a shock.

I worked four days a week and studied at college one day. On an average day during my apprenticeship, I would do quite



## Experience

**'You learn more in three months at the garage than you would in a year at college'**

Shay Chuplis, 20, completed an apprenticeship at a garage in London. He now works as a mechanic for the same employer who trained him

Abby Young Powell

I have always been interested in cars and wanted to learn first-hand how they work. The way I see it, being a mechanic is like being the doctor of a car. An engine has so many different parts and you have got to know everything about them.

I thought I knew about cars before I started, but when I got here I realised I still had a lot to learn. That was a bit of a shock.

I worked four days a week and studied at college one day. On an average day during my apprenticeship, I would do quite

It was good to have a mentor. They were helpful and taught me how to do things. There were a few other apprentices here at the same time as me, too. Most apprentices come through the same college, so we already knew each other and went to the garage together. It's good because you get to make friends and it is nice to work with people you can have a laugh with. I wish I had known how hard it can be at times too, though. In the winter it is cold and you can hurt your hands, but I guess that's part of the job.

I've learned so much. In the beginning, I would sometimes run away from jobs because I wasn't confident. Now I am fine on any car. I can diagnose the problem and do jobs with my eyes closed. You learn more in three months in a garage than you can in a year in college. I feel proud that I know my trade. At the moment I am taking a break from studying to work at the garage, but I plan to do another level of training here.

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# History

## Tanners, tailors and candlestick makers - the story of apprenticeships stretches back to the middle ages

**Historian Dr Jacob Field reveals how integral learning on the job has been for many centuries**

**Sue George**

**S**ince at least the middle ages, many people have entered working life by taking up a formal apprenticeship. But while the types of individuals who became apprentices, as well as the process involved, has obviously varied, all of them needed to learn a particular craft.

"[Apprentices] came to live in London and other big cities, to build up skills and make connections," explains historian Dr Jacob Field, who has researched extensively into apprenticeships during the 16th-18th centuries. Apprenticeships were also an opportunity for young people to move away from home. Apprentices would be indentured to their masters, who would be responsible

for their "moral welfare", as well as feeding, housing, and teaching them. However: "The masters would often receive a premium for taking up the apprentice and did not necessarily have to pay them," says Field.

These apprentices were from the "middling sort", rather than the poorest people, although in the 18th and 19th centuries, orphans were sometimes taken on as "pauper apprentices" to work in mills.

As the 19th century progressed into the 20th, many of the skills involved in manual trades were taught via formal apprenticeships, though room and board were no longer included. These apprentices were predominantly male, but girls did take up apprenticeships in "women's jobs" such as millinery and dressmaking.

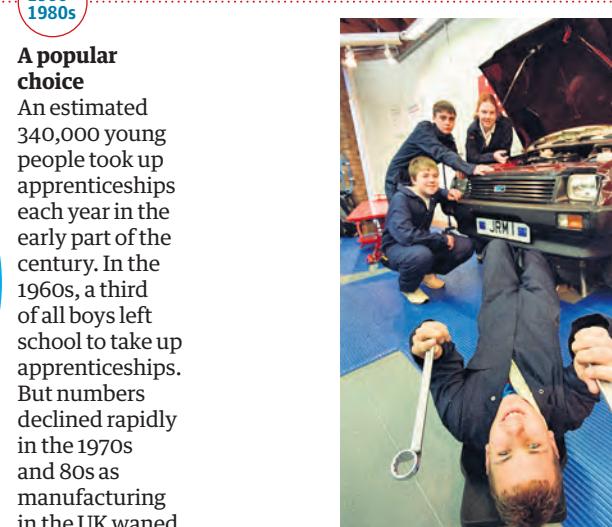
Apprenticeships remained popular for male school-leavers until at least the 1960s, although the emphasis was often on the length of training, rather than its quality. It was only with the introduction of modern apprenticeships in the 1990s that apprenticeships became "proper jobs", with nationally recognised qualifications.



**1156**  
**Guilds**  
First mentioned in a historical text in 1156, guilds in the middle ages were associations of craftsmen focused on a specific trade, such as the tanners' guild. Each guild had well defined positions of apprentice, journeyman, and master.



**1327**  
**Livery companies**  
These trade associations developed out of the guilds. They included the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, given a royal charter in 1327. It was founded to regulate the goldsmith trade and supported apprenticeships. It still does so today.



**1563**  
**The Statute of Artificers**  
Many crafts were regulated under this law, introduced by parliament rather than the guilds. It stated that apprenticeships were generally to last seven years, and a master should have a maximum of three apprentices.



**1814**

**Statute abolished**

Apprenticeships became less common during the Industrial Revolution, partly due to conditions of employment in the factories. However, they were still needed where a high level of skill was essential, such as engineering or ship-building.



**1900-1980s**

**A popular choice**

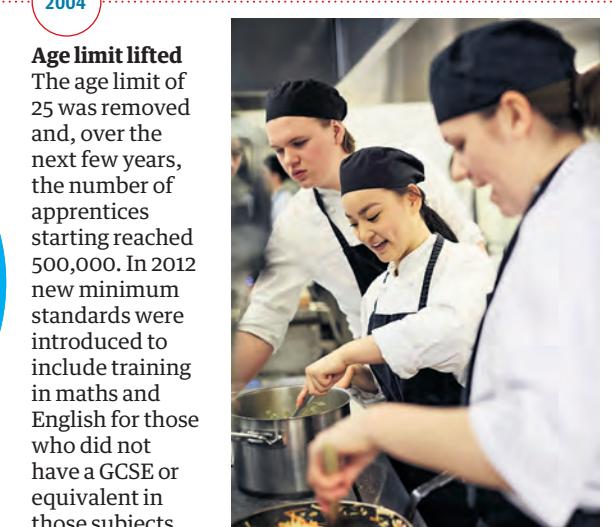
An estimated 340,000 young people took up apprenticeships each year in the early part of the century. In the 1960s, a third of all boys left school to take up apprenticeships. But numbers declined rapidly in the 1970s and 80s as manufacturing in the UK waned.



**1993**

**Government action**

Kenneth Clarke, then chancellor of the exchequer, announced the launch of a new apprenticeship scheme. This, he said, "would increase the number of young people obtaining the technical and craft skills the country has been lacking".



**1994-1995**

**Modern Apprenticeships**

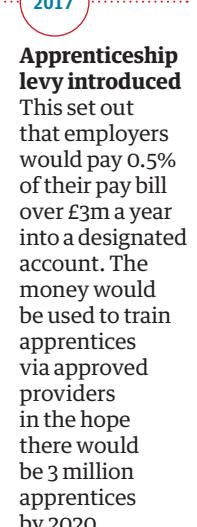
Clarke's scheme was rolled out. Unlike previous apprenticeships, these were properly paid jobs, with training leading to nationally recognised qualifications (NVQs). The costs of training were divided between the government and the employer.



**2004**

**Age limit lifted**

The age limit of 25 was removed and, over the next few years, the number of apprentices starting reached 500,000. In 2012 new minimum standards were introduced to include training in maths and English for those who did not have a GCSE or equivalent in those subjects.



**2017**  
**Apprenticeship levy introduced**  
This set out that employers would pay 0.5% of their pay bill over £3m a year into a designated account. The money would be used to train apprentices via approved providers in the hope there would be 3 million apprentices by 2020.

▼ Clockwise from main: Apprentices at a carriage works, 1903; a painting of textile workers, circa 1800; students being taught the principles of transmitter operation in the 1940s; Stockton council's modern apprenticeship intake, 1996  
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, TIMELINE: GETTY; PLAINPICTURE

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Find out more at: [devon.cc/apprenticeships](http://devon.cc/apprenticeships) or follow us on Twitter (@DCCApprentices) or Facebook (Devon County Council Apprenticeship Scheme) to keep up to date with the latest opportunities.

▼ Last year, Kimmie Wheatland won an award at Inside Housing's Women in Housing Awards  
PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER L PROCTOR



## Experience

**'When I first started it was terrifying, but training as a carpenter has changed my life'**

After discovering she loved working with wood, Kimmie Wheatland landed a dream job as a trainee carpenter for a housing association

### Ellen Manning

For Kimmie Wheatland, an apprenticeship wasn't just the route to a job she loves but something that helped turn her life around. "I had been off work for three-and-a-half years because of mental health problems. My partner is a roofer and suggested to keep myself busy I should try and build a shed. It all started there really - it turned out I'm pretty good with wood."

Wheatland, 31, from Basingstoke, Hampshire, was a tenant with Sovereign Housing Association and when she spoke to them about trying to get back into work, she was told about their adult learners programme for trades apprentices over the age of 25. Now in her final year of a 24-month trainee carpenter

course, she says: "When I first started it was absolutely terrifying, but everyone was so nice and I met my mentor, who I'm still with now. When I'm on the road it's not: 'Oh she's female and we're men', it's: 'Everyone is a trade'."

Wheatland says the physical nature of the job can be a challenge for a woman. "I haven't got the strength for some things but I find a different way of doing them. When I found I couldn't lift fire doors I used my tool allowance to buy a plasterboard lifter which works perfectly. You just have to think outside the box."

Being a woman also brings advantages. "Sometimes we've visited houses where women live alone and aren't happy with a male tradesman coming in. We visited one traditional Muslim household and the woman didn't feel comfortable talking to my male work partner without her husband there but because I was there we still managed to get the work done for her."

Wheatland's dedication hasn't gone unnoticed - last year she scooped a Young Achiever award at Inside Housing's Women in Housing Awards. But for her, the apprenticeship is more than a job. "It literally has changed my life."

**'Everyone is so nice, when I'm on the road it's not: 'Oh she's female and we're men' it's: 'Everyone is a trade'"**

**Kimmie Wheatland**  
Trainee carpenter

# Networking

## There's more to apprenticeships than hard work

With plenty of socials for apprentices, young people who don't go to university won't miss any of the fun

### Heidi Scrimgeour

The social side of student life lures many young people to university - there's no denying the appeal of constant partying, interspersed with the occasional lecture. But is the idea that skipping university means missing out on a spectacular social life outdated?

Yes, according to Alexandar Gyurov, 18, from south London. He dropped out of studying computer science at Farnborough sixth form college during his first year to pursue an apprenticeship with WhiteHat, a tech startup that matches non-graduate talent with apprenticeship opportunities and training.

Never having had the opportunity to attend professional networking events while at school or college, Gyurov admits to feeling worried about the social side of being an apprentice, but says he was keen to make the most of it.

"From the first social event I went to - a games night for apprentices - I saw the value of socialising with others who were taking a similar path to me," he says. "You can learn a lot from other apprentices,

especially from those who are further down the road in their apprenticeship."

Through the social scene laid on for apprentices by WhiteHat, Gyurov has had the opportunity to attend

events that have helped him upskill, including Google Garage sessions and monthly workshops on topics such as confidence building and developing a personal brand.

Gyurov has been a software engineering apprentice for eight months, and now runs a tech network event for WhiteHat, teaching other apprentices about coding, animation and VR. He's also grown in confidence when it comes to networking.

"I've had a warm welcome at every networking event I've attended," he says. "People are very intrigued to hear about a person doing an apprenticeship as it's such a different route to employment than going to University, but one that's becoming increasingly popular as businesses become aware of the value that apprentices can bring."

If there's a challenging side to the social aspect of life as an apprentice, Gyurov says it's making time for all the invitations. "It's amazing how many opportunities you get as an apprentice, but they don't happen on their own - it's really up to you to pursue opportunities and push yourself into the social scene," he says.

Ditching student life in favour of an apprenticeship has helped Gyurov's social life rather than hindered it. The student bar comes at a price, after all, even if you don't realise it until it's time to tot up your student debt upon graduation.

Rather than getting him into debt, Gyurov's social life is equipping him with skills he'll continue using long after his apprenticeship is over. "The biggest eye-opener for me is how important and useful meeting other people can be," he says. "It really can open a lot of doors, now but also in the future."



**AstraZeneca Apprenticeships**

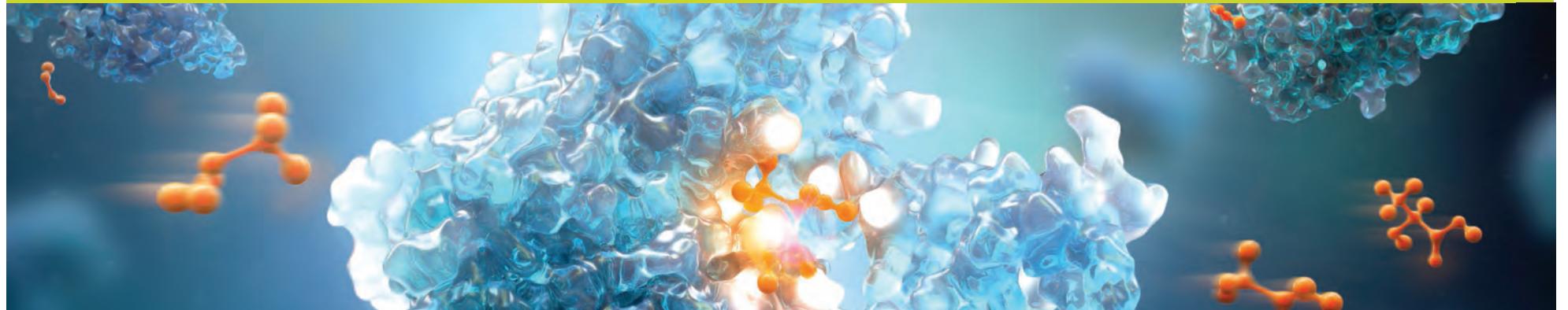
AstraZeneca is one of the world's most exciting global bio-pharmaceutical companies. From Scientists to Supply Chain, IT to Engineering, we're on a mission to turn ideas into life-changing medicines that improve patients' lives and benefit society. Based in over 100 countries, with over 64,000 employees worldwide and 7,400 in the UK. We need great people who share our passion for science and have the drive and determination to meet the unmet needs of patients around the world.

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▼ Apprenticeship open days offer the chance to ask employers questions  
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



## Applications

### How to join your dream scheme

Apprentices and scheme leaders explain how to research what's out there, find a role that fits, and show employers your potential

**'Demonstrate you're a team player, you love to learn, and that you want to engage with all aspects of the company'**

Katherine Marshall  
Lloyds Bank

**I**t's a good time to consider an apprenticeship. Private companies are already fully on board, and now the public sector is gearing up for a new chapter. The government announced in 2018 that public bodies with more than 250 employees must ensure 2.3% of staff are apprentices by 2021. From local government to the NHS, it's about finding the right position for you.

Daniel John joined an apprenticeship scheme at South Gloucestershire council. "It was targeted towards people with disabilities, which I thought would meet my needs [John has Asperger's]. What I enjoy the most is making friends and doing a good job."

You apply for an apprenticeship in the same way you would a job - it's not the same as a university application.

With that in mind, it's good

to start off by doing a decent amount of research. Employers have information about their apprenticeship schemes on their websites, and you can also find roles advertised on the UCAS site. If you have anything to discuss, you can call up employers for an informal chat.

If your application is successful, an employer will invite you in for an interview or assessment. Employers use different tools and techniques to get a sense of your skills.

"Update your CV with the things you are good at and why you think you would work well at their company," advises Emily Clark, an apprentice civil engineer at PD Ports.

Before an interview, research the company. "Have an idea of the role, benefits and length," Maynard says.

On the day, try and keep calm, she advises: "Take your time to answer questions and be precise, rather than ramble on."

Finally, if all of this makes you nervous, we'll let you in on a secret: many of the people hiring apprentices say they're not looking for concrete qualifications or the finished article. "We're looking for potential, rather than competency," says Katherine Marshall, apprenticeships lead at Lloyds Bank.

According to Clark, the most important thing is to show you're willing to work hard and that you're keen to learn: "Demonstrate you're a team player, you love to learn, and that you want to engage with all aspects of the company."

scheme for over 16s), and above me are the graduate apprentices like Vickie, who are a bit older than me. I wanted to meet people my age so I went on Bumble to look for friends and I made one. Tonight we are going to a firework display together.

**Abby Young-Powell**

#### Monday

I'm doing an apprenticeship at Leidos, a service management centre in Glasgow that looks into and resolves customer issues. I'll be here for a year, and during that time I get to work on different projects.

First thing on a Monday morning, I check my calendar and see if I've got any meetings. My colleagues often ask me to take the minutes, which helps me learn.

So far I've been to one that was about ethics, another on purchase orders, and one about designing a website. I take notes and listen to what's going on.

#### Tuesday

Jo, my sponsor, gives me tasks to do. She gets me to do a lot of things that she doesn't have time to do herself, but they're still important.

My current project is to build a new website for the service management centre. I have to follow a template, but within that I have control of the design and get to make it look as fancy as I want.

When it's done, I'll present it to my colleagues to see whether they like it. I get to be hands-on but I also get constructive criticism, which is good.

Jo messages me every day to make sure I have got work to do. She's warm, open and funny. She's not strict with me and lets me have creative control over my tasks.

#### Wednesday

I have lunch with my buddy Vickie, who supports me. She's 26, still at uni, and a graduate apprentice. She's lovely. I didn't think I'd get along as well as I do with somebody who's nearly 10 years older than me. At lunch, we don't talk about work, we talk about random things and relax. There'll always be someone I can sit and have lunch with.

It's good that work is sociable because I relocated from Manchester to Glasgow for the apprenticeship and at the moment, I live by myself.

I'm the youngest at work. I am what's known as a "modern apprentice" (I'm part of a Scottish

**Twon an award at work a colleague had recommended me for - the highlight of my apprenticeship so far'**

Angel Maynard  
Apprentice, Leidos

# Working week

## Prizes, parties, and peer support

scheme for over 16s), and above me are the graduate apprentices like Vickie, who are a bit older than me. I wanted to meet people my age so I went on Bumble to look for friends and I made one. Tonight we are going to a firework display together.

#### Thursday

I've won an award from Leidos for some work I did for a client. A colleague recommended me for it and I was rewarded with a bit of money and recognition.

After I found out I'd won, I immediately rang my dad and told him. It made me feel proud and valued. This has been the highlight of my apprenticeship so far.

#### Friday

At the end of the week people tend to go out for drinks together after work. I've been looking forward to this Friday in particular because we've got a special staff social - the company is hiring professional actors to come in and put together a murder mystery, and there will be drinks and pizza.

This kind of thing gives you something to look forward to. Overall, I can't put into words how grateful I am to have this apprenticeship.





#### About us

We're a membership organisation, providing digital solutions for UK education and research. We want a world where people learn, discover and thrive through access to technology. No matter who they are or where they live. We're a social enterprise, so every penny we create is reinvested in our core purpose.

We're a community and a very social place to work. Across our offices, we have everything from rounders teams to picnics in the park and 'pizza Thursdays'.

#### Not the normal 9-5

We have friendly, open plan, modern offices in Bristol, Harwell (Oxford), London and Manchester.

We want to make sure our people have the flexibility they need to balance their personal lives and do well at work. So, we focus on outputs rather than presenteeism and are open to a whole range of ways of working including flexible hours and working from home.

#### Our values

Our values and behaviours are our guiding principles. They define how we work and help us to do what we do so well. They are pride, pace, passion, teamwork and trust.

We celebrate diversity and know that it's critical for our success and want to make sure we are an inclusive, flexible organisation. We know that diversity of experience, approach and personality enables us to provide better services to our members.

#### Our apprenticeships

We've worked hard to make our apprenticeship programmes the best experience they can be for everyone involved and are really proud to have been recently awarded 24th place in the top 100 apprenticeship providers in the UK.

#### Our apprenticeship programmes include:

- Meaningful and challenging work where your ideas will be heard, and you can really make a difference
- Comprehensive on the job training specially tailored for your course
- A fully trained internal mentor who will provide you with ongoing support and guidance
- Regular meet-ups with all our apprentices across Jisc, to share ideas and experiences, support each other and learn additional skills

- Plenty of time off to study, with our experts on hand to answer any questions you may have
- Lots of additional support from people like your manager, team mates and the apprenticeship team; we are a friendly bunch who all want you to do really well!

Our apprenticeships are really diverse and include things like marketing, legal, business administration, IT, HR, software development and cyber security. They range from 18 months to six years and there are lots of learning options available.

#### What our apprentices say about us

I have picked up many new skills and lots of knowledge throughout my modules which I then come to find myself doing a couple days after in the work place. This really helps pick up the pace of my learning and me progressing to the final product of my qualification.

I receive lots of support from my employer. Everyone in my team is friendly and is happy to help me with any issues or problems that I may have.

I would recommend Jisc because I think the organisation cares about its employees, and they offer very good opportunities for young people. I have already met the mayor of Bristol through working at Jisc and other apprentices had the opportunity to go to the houses of parliament.

I love how close the apprentices are. My team are so helpful and easy to communicate with. The work is exciting and always interesting as I am learning new things every day.

The whole company has been very supportive of me, not just my manager, mentor and team but everyone I have spoken to.

They are very supportive of me while studying and also help me to learn while still giving me the trust to work on real projects with the rest of the team.

I have picked up many skills that will stay with me for life that I wouldn't have if I was at school. I have also met some great friends.

#### Apply for an apprenticeship at Jisc

We will be advertising for our next intake of apprentices in February. This will start in September. You can register for an email alert when these go live via our careers site [jisc.ac.uk/jobs](http://jisc.ac.uk/jobs) or by clicking here.

# Career paths

## How apprentices from the 1990s reached the top



▲ An apprentice steeplejack gets to work in Kings Lynn, Norfolk PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Now with successful careers or running their own businesses, former apprentices explain how the schemes helped them

Sue George

**G**overnment figures indicate that almost a quarter of a million people started a modern apprenticeship scheme in the five years following their introduction in 1994. The people on the right are just six of those hundreds of thousands who became apprentices in sectors from business to stonemasonry between 1994 and 1999.

Although not all of our six interviewees enjoyed or valued every aspect of their apprenticeship, every one considers now that the scheme they joined was a worthwhile way to start their working lives.

Since graduating from their own apprenticeship schemes, several of these interviewees have taken on apprentices themselves, and some are now part of large organisations that pride themselves on maintaining a commitment to running apprenticeship schemes and on-the-job training.

Whether or not the interviewees continued on the same career track which their apprenticeship prepared them for, they all valued opportunities afforded them at the start of their careers - in particular, the chance to earn a fair wage while gaining professional qualifications.

**I wasn't sure what to do in life, but I knew I liked taking things apart and putting them back together'**

Martin Price  
Director of operations



**Martin Price**  
Mechanical engineering apprenticeship  
In 1996, I was 17 and wasn't sure what to do in life. I knew I liked taking things apart and putting them back together, so I took a mechanical engineer's apprenticeship at an automotive component manufacturer's. I learned the basics of engineering, doing an NVQ level three and a BTec in mechanical engineering. I returned to do on-the-job training, and gained an HNC.

In 2000, I was approached by my current employer where I now work as the director of operations. We work with In-Comm, a training provider for apprentices rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted. This is a great time to be an apprentice in the engineering sector.

**I have started my own marketing and PR company with five employees, including one apprentice'**

Katrina Cliffe  
Managing director



**Katrina Cliffe**  
Business administration apprenticeship  
I left school just before my 16th birthday in August 1999 and went straight into an apprenticeship in business administration.

After three boring months working for a car dealership, I sought out an opportunity working on reception for a marketing recruitment business. I gained my NVQ level two in business and since then, I have completed a certificate in business with the Open University and gained two diplomas from the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

I worked as marketing manager before going freelance, and starting my PR and marketing company that now works to raise the profile of small businesses in the north of England. I employ five members of staff, including one apprentice.

## Apprenticeships

**Philip Parry**  
Stonemasonry apprenticeship  
I joined Wells Cathedral Stonemasons after my GCSEs in the summer of 1996, gaining an NVQ level three in stonemasonry. I first worked as a banker mason, someone who carves stone, rather than a fixer mason, who fixes it to the buildings. I really enjoyed the work and still do.

After my apprenticeship, I represented the UK at the Skills Olympics, an international competition for apprentices. I then worked at Wolff Stone for nearly 20 years and now I am self-employed. My work varies a lot, covering everything from gravestones to fireplaces, repair work and restoration.

Apprenticeships are the best way to learn physically how to do a job. Classroom teaching has a place but is no match for on-the-job experience.

**'Classroom teaching has its place, but it is no match for the on-the-job experience of an apprenticeship'**

Philip Parry  
Stonemason



**Antony Streets**  
Electrical apprenticeship  
In 1997, I started an apprenticeship with Wessex Electricals in Shaftesbury. I went to college one day a week, and the other four were out working in the field with other electricians. I finished in 2002, with a level three NVQ.

Now I'm electrical manager for Sovereign housing association. We have 57,000 properties across south and south-west England. I'm responsible for everything electrical: from repairs, to installing new systems. When I started, I made sure we had apprentices - that's where we get our future tradespeople.

If you want to be an apprentice, just go for it. Not everyone wants to

**'If you want to be an apprentice, then you should just go for it. Not everyone wants to sit behind a desk'**

Antony Streets  
Electrical manager



**I have grown with the company... I love watching new apprentices achieve their dreams'**

Kelly Medley  
Training director



**Kelly Medley**  
Early years apprenticeship  
I left school aged in aged 16 in 1995 with very poor GCSEs, so I did a foundation course at college.

The MD of Tops Day Nurseries, Cheryl Hadland, was my tutor. I asked if she had any jobs; as a result, I started as an early years apprentice in the Parkstone nursery in 1996.

I was made a supervisor at a new Tops nursery in 2000, then became deputy manager. In 2002, I moved to the Aspire training team, part of the same group as Tops. By 2007 I was a training director.

I have grown with the company, which now has a chain of nurseries across south-west England. I love watching new apprentices achieve their dreams and qualifications.

**The data side bored me to tears... But things really took off for me when I started a role in sales'**

Michael Fitzgibbon  
Managing director



**Michael Fitzgibbon**  
Commercial apprenticeship  
At 18, I had just completed a business and finance diploma at college but I wanted to develop my qualifications while earning some much-needed wages.

My apprenticeship was based in the market planning department of British Steel in Redcar, and I started in 1994. I supported the sales teams with data on manufacturing trends. The data side bored me to tears.

I became a commercial analyst after the apprenticeship but things really took off when I started a role in sales. I left there after eight years and went to the industrial IT sector.

After taking voluntary redundancy from that, I went to uni to do an undergraduate degree, securing a first in music production.

I'm now co-founder of SEO agency, Digital Tepee.

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