

Mythbusting: **Apprenticeships**



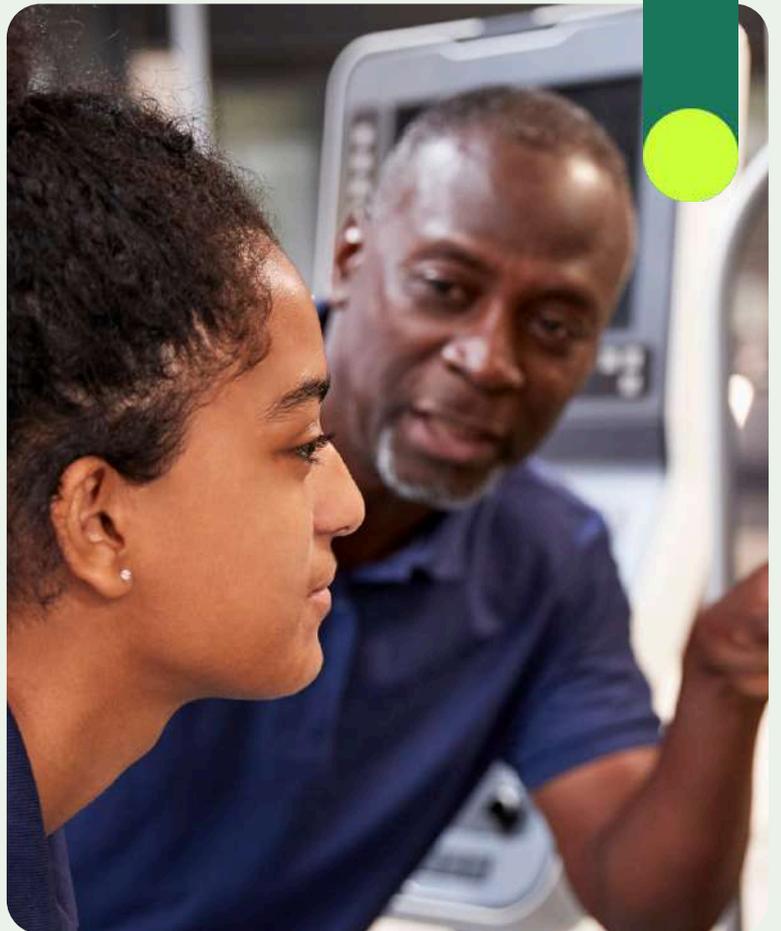
What is an Apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a government-funded training programme that allows you to develop staff by combining paid work with structured training, leading to a recognised qualification for your apprentice.

For employers, apprenticeships are a way to upskill your existing staff, or train new recruits, with most of the training costs covered through the Apprenticeship Levy or government co-funding.

Key benefits

- ✓ Develop skills aligned to your business needs
- ✓ Improve staff retention and progression
- ✓ Create clear career pathways
- ✓ Maximise return on levy payments (avoid losing unused funds)
- ✓ Access high-quality, regulated training



Outdated Perceptions

Despite apprenticeships playing a crucial role in addressing skills shortages across the UK, many employers are still held back by outdated perceptions.

These myths can prevent organisations from accessing a cost-effective, high-quality way to develop talent, improve retention, and future-proof their workforce.

When viewed through a modern lens, apprenticeships are not just a training option, they're a strategic investment in skills, productivity, and workforce sustainability.

Employers who move beyond these myths are better positioned to address skills gaps, reduce recruitment costs, and build loyal, capable teams for the future.

In a competitive labour market, apprenticeships offer you a flexible, funded, and proven way to grow talent from within.

In this guide, we explore some of the most common misconceptions around apprenticeships, and reveal the reality behind them.



Leah Fisher
People Development Advisor



I believe apprenticeships are an effective, supportive mechanism to help inspire and develop people. Building on skills that are needed to make our business future ready is key, and will ultimately drive organisational success.



Myth #1

“Apprenticeships are only for young people and school leavers”

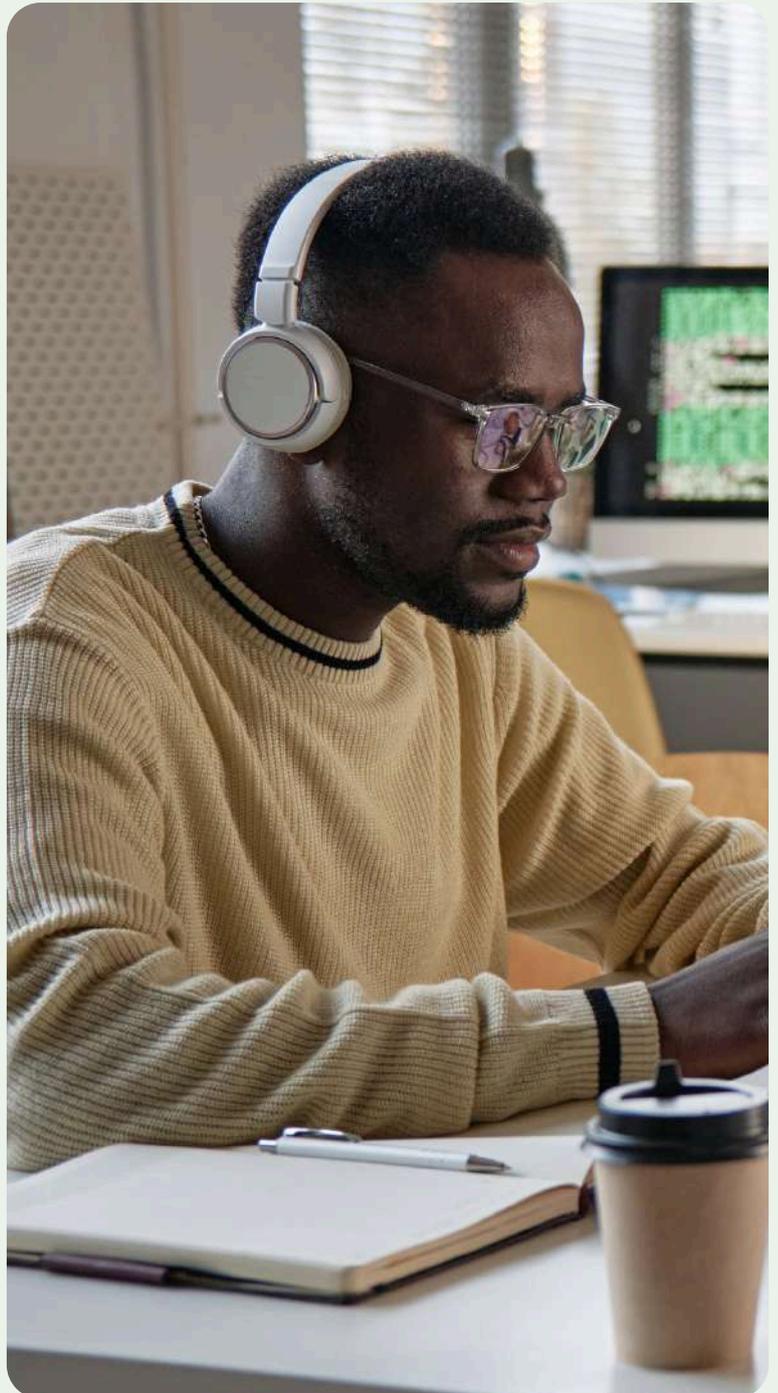
One of the most persistent myths is that apprenticeships are only suitable for 16–18 year-olds straight out of school.

Apprenticeships are in fact open to anyone aged 16 and over.

In fact, a growing proportion of apprentices are adults, including existing employees, career changers, and individuals returning to the workforce.

Many employers now use apprenticeships as a structured way to upskill their current staff, rather than solely as a recruitment tool for new entrants.

This flexibility makes apprenticeships a powerful workforce development option at every career stage.



Myth #2

“Apprenticeships are only for trades or manual roles”

Some employers still associate apprenticeships solely with construction, engineering, or traditional trade roles such as plumbers or electricians.

Modern apprenticeships span hundreds of occupations.

Nowadays, apprenticeships are available in almost every sector.

From digital and IT, to finance, marketing, HR, leadership and project management, there are apprenticeship standards designed for professional, technical, and managerial roles.

These also include degree and postgraduate-level programmes.

Apprenticeships are no longer limited by industry; they're shaped by business need.



Myth #3

“Apprenticeships are expensive and complicated to set up”

Many employers assume apprenticeships involve excessive paperwork, high costs, and a significant administrative burden.

Government funding significantly reduces training costs.

This is true for the large majority of employers, particularly small and medium-sized businesses.

Training providers such as us will typically employ recruitment, compliance, reporting, and programme management, making the process far more straightforward than expected.

When compared to traditional recruitment and training costs, apprenticeships are often a highly cost-effective solution.



Myth #4

“Apprentices require constant supervision and time management”

Some employers worry that apprentices will require more time, attention, and management than they can realistically provide.

Apprentices are employees, not students.

When you hire an apprentice, they will have defined job roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations.

While line managers provide guidance and support, as they would with any team member, training providers such as us will deliver the formal learning and assessment elements.

With the right structure in place, apprentices will quickly become productive and valuable contributors for your business.



Myth #5

“Off the job training reduces overall productivity”

The requirement for apprentices to spend 20% of their time in “off-the-job” training can cause concern for employers focused on output and efficiency.

Off-the-job training is flexible and can include workplace learning

Not only can off-the-job training include learning in the workplace, but it can also include project work, shadowing, mentoring, and online study.

Crucially, this training is directly linked to your apprentice’s role and your own business objectives.

Rather than reducing productivity, this time investment develops skills that improve performance, capability, and long-term value to your organisation.



Myth #6

“Apprentices are often lower ability or less academic”

There is still a misconception that apprenticeships are a “second-best” option for those who struggle academically.

Apprenticeships are rigorous, accredited programmes

Apprenticeship programmes are designed to blend practical experience with formal learning.

Many of our apprenticeships for example require strong entry criteria, and can lead to qualifications up to degree and master’s level.

Our apprenticeships also attract motivated, capable individuals who prefer applied learning, not lower-quality talent.



Myth #7

“Apprentices will often leave as soon as they qualify”

Some employers worry that once an apprentice completes their programme, they will leave for another employer.

Retention rates for apprentices are consistently high

We know from experience that retention rates are consistently at a high level for apprentices staying with their employer once the apprenticeship ends.

This is because apprentices train within the organisation, develop role-specific skills, and build loyalty over time, and therefore more likely to stay and progress internally.

Apprenticeships also often create stronger engagement and long-term commitment than external recruitment.



Myth #8

“Apprenticeships only benefit large Levy-paying employers”

Smaller businesses sometimes believe apprenticeships are designed mainly for large organisations that pay into the Apprenticeship Levy.

Non-levy-paying employers can access substantial co-funding

Government funding for apprenticeships isn't limited to just large, levy-paying employers, or the number of apprentices they can employ.

In many cases, small businesses benefit the most, using apprenticeships to build skills they struggle to recruit externally.

Apprenticeships are not just for large employers, they're a practical solution for businesses of all sizes.



Success story: J Brand

What was the challenge that led to you using an apprenticeship programme?

We've always been a diverse business, but over the last few years we've evolved further, with a number of contracts to deliver IT installation and support services to multiple sites across the UK.

This led us to realise we could provide a more rounded IT apprenticeship and this would be a good way to invest in our future engineers.

What, for you, are the key benefits of apprenticeships?

The "on the job" training means we have a fully qualified engineer ready to go upon completion of the apprenticeship. We're also investing in our future via apprenticeships and we're helping to provide an avenue into the industry.

We currently have eight apprentices and love investing in their careers.



Adrian Fillingham
Resource Manager



They have been fantastic in getting to know us as a business and have worked with us to ensure that our apprentices are getting the most out of the role, and the apprenticeship itself.



Featured Apprenticeships

Take a look below at just some of the apprenticeships we have available, the job roles you could add to your business or use to upskill a member of your existing team.

AI & Automation Practitioner

18 months

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Automation Practitioner Apprenticeship is a Level 4 programme designed to develop confident, ethical and work-ready practitioners who can support organisations to adopt AI and automation responsibly.

HR Support (Level 3)

15 months

CIPD

Designed to develop professionals who provide essential HR services, from recruitment and onboarding, to employee relations and policy guidance, developing skills to support HR functions and deliver positive staff experience.

Commercial Catering Equipment Technician

27 months



This Level 3 Commercial Catering Equipment Technician Apprenticeship has been developed in partnership with CEDA (the membership association for the foodservice, catering and hospitality industry) and is designed for newcomers, as well as those with some experience working in the gas industry.



NATIONAL
APPRENTICESHIP
WEEK 2026

