

2025-2026



Association of
Apprentices

THE ASSOCIATION OF APPRENTICES' GUIDE TO

GET AHEAD



FOR MANAGERS OF APPRENTICES

WELCOME

So you're an apprentice's manager...

As a line manager to apprentices, you hold a transformative role in developing the next generation of talent. Your leadership, guidance and support directly shape not only their professional capabilities but also their confidence, workplace identity and future career trajectory.

Today's apprentices often arrive with digital fluency, fresh perspectives, and drive. What they need isn't just direction, but a balance between structure and autonomy, challenge and support, feedback and encouragement.

This handbook is designed for frontline managers who make apprenticeships work. Inside, you'll discover practical strategies addressing the specific dynamics of apprentice development, from navigating Off-The-Job Training to mental health.

Effective apprentice management creates environments where talent feels valued enough to contribute and safe enough to make mistakes. Whether welcoming your first apprentice or enhancing your approach, this guide provides practical tools to help you succeed in this important management role.

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getting STARTED

insights and info you should know



The Apprentice Voice: What Really Matters

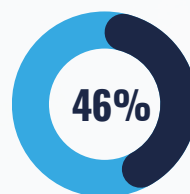
The Association of Apprentices (AoA) BIG Apprentice Survey 2024 captured the authentic experiences of over 2,000 apprentices across the UK, spanning all levels, sectors and backgrounds. These insights reveal what truly matters to apprentices, the challenges they face, and how employers can better support their journey to create more effective, inclusive apprenticeship programmes.



of apprentices value gaining work experience alongside a qualification



value career progression opportunities



Value practical learning

Key Challenges Apprentices Face

1. Managing work/life balance
2. Time management
3. Completing & recording Off-The-Job Training

62% of apprentices reported feeling stressed or anxious in the last 12 months

What Apprentices Need From Managers

31% highlighted that constructive feedback and coaching are the most effective support their line managers can provide. Apprentices also report that lack of communication and guidance is the most detrimental way that a line manager can impede progress.

Creating Better Apprenticeship Experiences

The top 3 things that would make apprenticeships easier to achieve:

1. Having a mentor who has been through the same process
2. More time to complete Off-The-Job Training
3. More interesting or engaging content/activities

Useful resources:

[Onboarding tips for managers](#) Partners: For your new employees, onboarding can be an overwhelming experience. Here are some tips to make the transition smooth and less stressful.

Watch this webinar: [Line Managing Apprentices - Building Supportive Relationships for Success](#)

getting STARTED

Here are top tips to support apprentices from the very beginning

Clarify Expectations

- Set clear expectations for the apprentice's role and goals.
- Review the relevant Apprenticeship Standards/Framework
- For apprentices with additional needs, utilise support resources.

Provide Structured Onboarding

- Ensure comprehensive induction and access to programmes and software.
- Introduce them to team members and key colleagues.
- Guide them to associationofapprentices.org.uk to leverage free apprentice membership.

Set Realistic Goals

- Establish achievable milestones that align with the assessment plan.
- Ensure goals are challenging but not overwhelming.
- Collaborate with the training provider to ensure alignment.
- Follow the Off-The-Job Training requirements.

Monitor Work-Life Balance

- Be mindful of the apprentice's workload and support wellbeing.
- Promote a healthy work environment in line with best practise.
- Utilise wellbeing resources like those from AoA Learn.

Prepare for the End Goal

- Offer guidance on job searches and professional growth.
- Ensure they apply for the Post-Apprenticeship Recognition Scheme (PARS).
- Where feasible, assist the apprentice in planning their next role from early on.

USE THE CHECKLIST TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE ON TRACK



tick these off as you go

MANAGERS' CHECKLIST



☐ Preparation:

- Obtain a copy of the apprenticeship standards/frameworks to understand what the apprentice will be undertaking.
- Set up a workspace for your apprentice with necessary equipment and ensure access to essential digital systems and platforms.
- Prepare team introduction highlighting the apprentice's learning journey.

☐ Induction:

- Facilitate introductions to team members and relevant departments.
- Share organisational values and explain how the apprenticeship contributes to business objectives.
- Embed the [Career Ready Programme](#) to kickstart apprentices' Off-The-Job Training.

☐ Training Implementation:

- Map workplace activities to training curriculum and establish protected Off-The-Job Training time - a mandatory part of their programme.
- Schedule progress reviews and attend training provider meetings every 12 weeks (minimum).
- Identify mentors who can provide both technical and pastoral support.
- Create skills development opportunities addressing specific standard requirements.

☐ Practical Support:

- Implement regular structured check-ins with clear outcomes and give your apprentice the opportunity to feedback on their experiences.
- Establish straightforward methods for recording off-the-job hours.
- Create opportunities for apprentices to apply learning to workplace challenges.

☐ Evidence Gathering:

- Set up systems for capturing competency evidence, this could include emails, photographs, minutes or screenshots of work-specific sites.
- Provide actionable feedback linked to apprenticeship standard requirements.
- Monitor progress against completion milestones and prepare for ongoing assessments, give time to put their evidence together.

☐ Integration Activities:

- Include apprentice in relevant project teams from the outset.
- Ensure apprentices utilise free membership with the Association of Apprentices for community, networking and [Off-The-Job Training resources](#).
- Create opportunities for two-way knowledge sharing between apprentice and experienced staff.
- Start with the end goal in mind: raise awareness of the [Post-Apprenticeship Recognition Scheme](#) and continued development to direct focus.



top tips for

MANAGING VS. COACHING

Today's organisations benefit from balancing coaching and managing approaches them at the same time. This creates high-performing teams optimising productivity. Understand the differences so you can get the most out of day-to-day operations.

Supervision vs. Support

Supervision focuses on task completion, performance monitoring, and accountability through direct oversight. Support concentrates on individual growth by providing resources and creating a safe learning environment for long-term potential.

The key difference: supervision addresses what needs doing, while support considers how individuals can best achieve and grow.

Productivity vs. Potential

While managing can provide structure and direction, its focus on achieving planned results by following set workflows may impede creativity and innovation. By promoting a culture of continuous learning, coaching offers individuals opportunities to grow and explore their untapped potential. It drives employee engagement, autonomy and ownership.

Direction vs. Development

Every situation might call for a different approach. For this reason, effective leaders should assess each case individually to determine if they need to be more directive or supportive. Managing is a good approach when directing a team's workflow to ensure it meets its goals or when a team experiences blockers preventing them from completing their tasks on time. And coaching is the right approach to help employees improve their soft skills to collaborate effectively or to improve their performance. It also helps them develop the critical-thinking skills they need to make informed decisions and produce high-quality work.

Managing and coaching are complementary skills that nurture your team's long-term growth and support them in meeting their objectives. Leverage them both when leading others.

THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

We empower apprentices throughout their experience and beyond. When properly supported, apprentices can thrive professionally while making valuable contributions to your business.

Five Key Benefits for Employers

1. Building a Strong Talent Pipeline

Apprentices develop skills specifically aligned to your organisational needs, learning not just technical competencies but also your company's culture, values and operational approaches. This creates a ready-made talent pool for future positions, reducing recruitment costs and improving team integration.

2. Enhancing Employee Retention

Research shows that apprentices who feel supported are more likely to remain with their employer long-term. By creating clear advancement pathways, you foster loyalty and transform apprentices into organisational advocates. This reduces operational disruption and the significant costs associated with staff turnover.

3. Cultivating a Learning Culture

When experienced staff mentor apprentices, it often reinvigorates their own enthusiasm and develops their leadership capabilities. This creates a positive ripple effect, with teams becoming more adaptable as knowledge sharing becomes embedded in company culture.

4. Driving Innovation Through Fresh Perspectives

Embrace the "but why?" questions that apprentices naturally ask. Their fresh perspective can identify improvements that those familiar with existing systems might miss. This questioning mindset often leads to increased productivity and new service developments.

5. Enhancing Organisational Reputation

Supporting apprentices demonstrates your commitment to workforce development and social responsibility. This strengthens your brand image, making you an employer of choice that attracts higher-calibre candidates. Educational partnerships increase brand visibility, often generating positive media coverage.

Return on Investment

THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF APPRENTICES FOR SMES

SMEs are the backbone of the UK economy, representing 99.8% of businesses and 60% of employment. At the Association of Apprentices, **1 in 3 members come from SMEs**, highlighting the critical role of smaller businesses in apprenticeship success.

Unique SME Considerations

Limited Resources, Maximum Impact

- Smaller teams mean every team member's contribution is critical
- Less room for extended training periods
- Need for faster skills integration
- More direct impact of apprentice's performance

Our Support for Your Journey

We provide networking platforms, masterclasses, and professional development guides to support smaller businesses in maximising their apprenticeship potential.

Strategic Advantages

Apprenticeships offer SMEs powerful benefits:

1. Tackling skills gaps
2. Bringing fresh talent and new perspectives into your organisation.
3. Apprentices develop strong connections with their employers, creating a more stable and engaged workforce.
4. Supporting business growth
5. Developing staff who grow alongside your company, building capabilities from within.
6. Strengthening communities
7. Investing in local talent, contributing to regional economic development.

Your Apprentice, Your Advantage - For SMEs, apprentices represent an investment in your company's future, tailored to your unique business needs. AoA has resources that help SMEs get the best from their apprentices through free membership, supporting development, engagement, and retention.

navigating apprentice PATHWAYS



Understanding Apprenticeship Standards

What Is an Apprenticeship Standard?

In England, an **apprenticeship standard** is a document that sets out what an apprentice needs to learn and demonstrate to be fully competent in a specific job role. It covers three key areas:

- **Skills** – what the apprentice should be able to do
- **Knowledge** – what they need to understand
- **Behaviours** – how they should act in the workplace

These standards are created by groups of employers to make sure they reflect real job requirements and industry expectations. Each standard details the level of the apprenticeship and also shows which job roles it applies to and what progression opportunities are available after completion.

Assessment Plans

Every apprenticeship standard comes with an Assessment Plan, which explains how the final assessment will be carried out. This is done by an independent organisation - currently called an End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), but soon to be known as an Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation (AAO).

The Assessment Plan ensures that apprentices are tested fairly and consistently at the end of their programme.



By Lee Reddington
Partnership Director at
Occupational Awards Limited



Tip 1: Get to Know the Apprenticeship Standard

Take a few minutes to read through the apprenticeship standard your apprentice is working towards. It clearly outlines the skills, knowledge and behaviours (KSBs) they're expected to develop during their programme. By understanding what's included in the standard, you'll be better equipped to:

- Support their learning and development
- Plan relevant tasks and experiences
- Make sure their progress stays on track

This helps ensure the apprentice gets the most out of their training, and that your business benefits too.



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Understanding Apprenticeship Standards

Tip 2: Begin with the End in Mind

In England, to complete their apprenticeship, every apprentice must pass a final assessment called the End-Point Assessment (EPA). That's why it's important to understand what the EPA involves right from the start, so you can help your apprentice prepare throughout their journey.

What you can do:

- Ask the Training Provider for EPA resources. These are usually provided by the assessment organisation (EPAO), and they explain how the final assessment works.
- Use the official resources from the EPAO whenever possible. Different organisations may interpret assessment plans slightly differently, so it's best to stick with what the EPAO provides.

What the Assessment Plan includes:

- The types of assessment used (e.g. observations, knowledge tests, interviews, presentations and projects etc.)
- Which skills, knowledge, and behaviours (KSBs) are assessed and how

Understanding this helps you support your apprentice in two key ways:

- Helping them develop the right knowledge, skills and behaviours
- Helping them showcase those KSBs effectively during their assessment

You can also involve other teams in your organisation, like HR or L&D, to support your apprentice with things like interview techniques or presentation skills, which can make a big difference in their final performance.



Tip 3: Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs)

Apprenticeship Standards are written against an occupational profile and your apprentice must be able to demonstrate all of the KSBs of the standard in their End-Point Assessment.

It's not enough for an apprentice to say, "I don't do that in my job." If they can't demonstrate all the required KSBs, they won't pass their EPA - and won't complete their apprenticeship.

That's why it's essential for you, as their line manager, to work closely with the apprentice and their training provider.

Together, you need to make sure the apprentice gets the right opportunities at work to learn and practise everything in the standard. Understanding this from the start is key to helping your apprentice succeed.



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Understanding Apprenticeship Standards

Tip 4: Help Your Apprentice Connect and Grow

Apprentices can sometimes feel unsure of themselves or disconnected from the wider team, especially if they're new to the workplace. You can help by encouraging them to:

- Get involved in projects or initiatives across different departments.
- Shadow colleagues to learn how other parts of the business work.
- Join external networks, like the Association of Apprentices, where they can meet other apprentices, attend events, and access useful resources.

This kind of involvement helps your apprentice:

- Build confidence and communication skills.
- Learn more about the business and how their role fits in.
- Develop the broader range of skills and behaviours needed for their EPA.
- Gain valuable experience that counts towards their Off-The-Job Training.
- Start building professional networks they can use throughout their career.

Tip 5: You Are Not alone

Just like your apprentice is learning their role, you're learning how to support them. You're not expected to be an apprenticeship expert!

Here's how you can get support:

- Talk to your training provider and assessment organisation - they're there to help.
- Connect with other managers who've worked with apprentices before.
- Join external networks, like regional Apprenticeship Ambassador groups, for advice and shared experiences.

Apprenticeship rules and processes can be complex and Assessment Plans are not always easy to follow or understand, even for the experts! So don't worry if you don't know everything, especially during this period of reform (explained on the next page). What matters most is being open to learning and using the support available.



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Understanding Apprenticeship Standards - England's Apprenticeship Reform



➤ WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW

Apprenticeships in England are going through a period of reform, and it's important that employers, especially line managers, stay informed. Your training providers and your assessment organisations should keep you updated on any changes that affect your role in supporting apprentices.

For most current apprentices, these changes won't have much impact. But for new apprentices starting in the future, updated assessment plans may change how you support them. It's important to work closely with your training provider to understand what's new.

➤ KEY CHANGE: BEHAVIOUR SIGN-OFF

One major change is that employers will now be responsible for confirming that apprentices have demonstrated the required behaviours for their role. This will no longer be assessed by training providers or assessment organisations. Instead, line managers will need to sign off on these behaviours before the apprentice can move on to their final assessment.

➤ OTHER CHANGES TO BE AWARE OF

- Some assessments may now take place during the apprenticeship, not just at the end.
- Training providers may be able to carry out parts of the assessment.
- Final assessments will still happen, but they will be reduced in scale, as some assessments will have been done on programme.
- The format and complexity of on programme and final/synoptic assessment will vary depending on the apprenticeship standard.

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Understanding Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland operate different apprenticeship frameworks with their own unique structures and requirements.

Northern Ireland's frameworks are managed by the Department for the Economy and include:

- Competence qualifications (NVQs)
- Knowledge qualifications
- Essential Skills

Assessment is typically ongoing throughout the apprenticeship with no separate end-point assessment process.

Scottish apprenticeships are managed by Skills Development Scotland and follow frameworks that include:

- Core Skills
- Technical Knowledge
- Occupational Competence

Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland are available across more than 80 frameworks and don't use End-Point Assessment. Instead, they rely on continuous assessment throughout the programme.

Welsh apprenticeship frameworks are overseen by the Welsh Government and include:

- Competence-based qualifications
- Knowledge-based qualifications
- Essential Skills Wales qualifications

Welsh frameworks focus on demonstrating competence through portfolio building and assessment, rather than a final assessment.

Nation	Main Framework Website
Scotland	Skills Development Scotland
Wales	Welsh Government Apprenticeships
Northern Ireland	NI Direct Apprenticeships

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Apprenticeship Standards/Frameworks in Practice



CREATING A STANDARD SUMMARY

Take time to read and familiarise yourself with the specific apprenticeship standard your apprentice is enrolled in. Create a simplified one-page summary of the most relevant competencies for your team's context, focusing on:

- Key knowledge areas that align with your workplace
 - Essential skills that can be developed through daily tasks
 - Required behaviours that match your organisational values
 - Assessment methods and evidence requirements
-



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Use the standard's occupational profile to identify key performance indicators for your apprentice:

- Set specific, measurable objectives based on the standard's requirements
 - Create a development timeline that aligns with the apprenticeship journey
 - Establish regular checkpoints to review progress against standards
 - Document evidence of competency development
-



WORKING WITH TRAINING PROVIDERS

Schedule a structured briefing with the training provider to:

- Clarify technical aspects of the standard that may be unclear
- Understand how assessments will be conducted
- Identify specific workplace evidence requirements
- Determine how Off-The-Job Training relates to workplace activities





supporting apprentice growth

LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Communication makes or breaks apprenticeships. When surveyed, apprentices identified poor communication as their biggest obstacle to success, while 31% said constructive feedback was the most valuable support managers provide.

The scenarios below show how small, strategic communication moments integrated into your existing workflow can transform your apprentice's experience, without consuming your valuable time.



The First Week: Team Integration

Scenario: Jamie, a new digital marketing apprentice, joins your team of experienced marketers.

What works: His manager arranges a "skills exchange" coffee break where each team member shares one area of expertise and one thing they're eager to learn. Jamie shares his trends knowledge, immediately establishing value while connecting with colleagues who can support different aspects of his learning journey.

Why it matters: This approach creates natural mentorship opportunities beyond the assigned buddy and shows apprentices that learning flows in all directions. Remember that 74% of apprentices value career progression, seeing how team members have developed gives them visible pathways.

The Onboarding Process: Meaningful Inductions

Scenario: Alex starts her engineering apprenticeship but is feeling overwhelmed by company procedures.

What works: Her manager uses the company induction materials but adds a quick 5-minute conversation connecting each key policy to Alex's day-to-day role.

Why it matters: This targeted approach transforms mandatory inductions from checkbox exercises into meaningful learning that apprentices can immediately apply, building confidence through relevance.

The Expectations Conversation: Performance Clarity

Scenario: Raj is three months into his customer service apprenticeship but uncertain about what "good" looks like.

What works: His manager leverages the apprenticeship standard documentation during their regular one-to-one. She highlights three key standards most relevant to Raj's current work and gives a brief real-world example of each. This 10-minute focused conversation creates immediate clarity.

Why it matters: This approach creates shared language around performance, making abstract standards concrete while using resources that already exist rather than creating new tools.

The Development Dialogue: Feedback That Builds

Scenario: Mai receives vague feedback that her project work "needs improvement."

What works: Her manager instead uses a simple "2-2" approach during their regular check-in: sharing two specific strengths he's observed and two clear opportunities for growth. Each point takes just 30 seconds to explain, and he ends by asking Mai which growth area she'd like to focus on before their next meeting.

Why it matters: The 31% of apprentices who value constructive feedback most, need this structured approach that builds confidence, rather than undermining it. This transforms feedback from judgment into partnership.



supporting apprentice growth

CAREER READY PROGRAMME

This programme is designed for new to work apprentices joining organisations at entry level, specifically to support the development of work-ready behaviours from day one.

And every UK apprentice can access it.



8 INTERACTIVE MODULES

ONLINE SELF-PACED LEARNING | 12-15 HOURS | CERTIFICATE

MODULES: Communication • Professionalism • Feedback & Growth • Teamwork • Wellbeing • Challenges & Change • Health & Safety • Proactivity & Responsibility

KEY BENEFITS

- Aligns with apprenticeship standards for entry-level programmes
- Supports Off-The-Job Training hours and skills mapping
- Provides measurable outcomes
- Reduces onboarding time and accelerates apprentice contribution
- Enhances workforce productivity and team morale
- Develops adaptable, confident, and reliable young talent
- Demonstrates social impact through workforce-ready development
- Supports national priorities in skills and employment readiness

IMPLEMENTATION MADE EASY

Seamlessly integrate with existing programmes while gaining valuable insights through reporting features. Apprentices benefit from flexible completion timelines and access to the supportive AoA Connect Community.

Organisation access: Available exclusively through AoA Learn for Association of Apprentices partners

Click here to learn more about partnerships on our website

Partnerships

EMPOWER YOUR APPRENTICES TO SUCCEED... FROM DAY ONE



Top tips for setting your apprentice up for success

Do your homework before they arrive. If you're new to managing apprentices, take a little time to get clear on what's expected of you. Every apprentice is different, and so is every manager! Know your role, get familiar with the basics, like helping your apprentice transition from education to workplace, making sure they get real hands-on experience, and carving out time for their off-the-job learning. A little prep can make a huge difference.

Connect with the training provider early and often. Don't wait for something to go wrong! Set up an intro chat with the provider running the apprenticeship. Find out what the course actually involves, what your apprentice will need from you, and who else in your team should be in the loop. When everyone's on the same page, things run much more smoothly.

Pick the right people to back them up. Give your apprentice a "go-to" teammate. This could be someone who's been there and done it, like a current or former apprentice, who can answer questions, offer a bit of wisdom, and help them find their feet early on. The buddy system works; it's simple, but it can make all the difference in those first few weeks and months.

Take time to discover what your apprentice brings to the table. Don't assume where their strengths or gaps might be, have a chat, ask about their interests, and explore what unique skills they might add to your team. Look for chances to let them shine, and make space for them to practise and build on the areas where they want to grow. Encourage them to get involved in meaningful projects from the start; a little stretch early on goes a long way.

Help your apprentice build a network. If your apprentice is working remotely or is the only one at their site, make a conscious effort to connect them with other apprentices—both within your organisation and outside. Encourage them to use their AoA membership, and point them towards any internal apprentice groups or networks. Building these connections can make a big difference, especially in those early days.

Celebrate their achievements. Don't miss the chance to nominate your apprentices for internal or external awards. Events like Mitie's annual apprenticeship awards are a great way to recognise outstanding effort, boost motivation and engagement, and let apprentices see the value they bring to the team. A little recognition goes a long way.

top tips for apprentice

REVIEWS

Reviews play a critical role in the development and success of apprentices. As a manager, your active participation in reviews with their training provider can greatly enhance the learning experience for your apprentices.



STAY ENGAGED

Attending apprentice reviews demonstrates your commitment to their growth and development. By participating in these meetings, you can gain insights into their progress, challenges, and areas for improvement. Ideally, aim to join your apprentice's reviews every 12 weeks to maintain regular communication and monitor their progress. This involvement shows your investment in their success and creates a supportive environment.



PROVIDE CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

One of the most valuable contributions you can make during reviews is offering constructive feedback. Share your observations and insights on the apprentice's performance, skills, and attitude. Highlight their achievements and acknowledge their efforts while also providing guidance on areas where they can improve. Remember to focus on specific examples and actionable suggestions to facilitate their growth. Constructive feedback helps apprentices understand expectations, develop self-awareness, and strive for continuous improvement.



CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Taking an active interest in your apprentice's long-term development is crucial. Celebrating their achievements not only boosts their morale but also reinforces their commitment to their apprenticeship.



Naomi Lavender,
Quality Director, QA

Naomi Lavender says to consider learner wellbeing:

“Take the opportunity to check in with apprentices around their wellbeing and the impact of the apprenticeship and work. Check the support and internal/external resources they have available to them.”

DID YOU KNOW: AoA recently hosted a Wellness Workshop, called *The Disclosure Dialogue*, led by apprentice member Katy Boyle, helping apprentices confidently discuss health conditions and navigate sensitive conversations with their employers.

TIPS FOR MANAGERS FROM MY APPRENTICESHIP JOURNEY

Based on my experience as an apprentice, here are key recommendations for managers supporting apprentices through their learning journey:



Harriet Kemp
Chartered Management Degree
Apprentice, Amazon

Understanding Time Management & Academic Requirements

Managing an apprentice requires proactive support with scheduling and understanding their academic commitments. Managers should familiarise themselves with the process of approving time off for apprenticeship events and university weeks, while helping apprentices balance their work and study responsibilities.

Active Engagement in the Learning Process

Successful apprentice management involves participating in university calls and meetings. This engagement helps managers align workplace projects with apprenticeship requirements, creating valuable learning opportunities that benefit both the apprentice and the organisation.

Setting Clear Documentation & Expectations

Create and maintain up-to-date documentation outlining expectations, deadlines and requirements. This becomes especially important during manager transitions, as having consistent written guidelines helps maintain continuity throughout the apprenticeship journey. Regular reviews ensure information stays relevant and prevents confusion from outdated materials.

Protecting Study Time

Quality study time is crucial for apprenticeship success. Managers should work with apprentices to establish protected learning periods, whether distributed throughout the week or scheduled in focused blocks. This demonstrates commitment to the apprentice's development while ensuring academic requirements are met alongside work responsibilities.

for successful apprenticeships **MANAGER ADVICE**



Tiffany Blakey
Apprenticeship Programme
Manager, South Western Railway

Day-to-Day Apprentice Support

Day-to-day support is provided by apprentices' line managers within their role and department. As Apprenticeship Programme Manager I try to be approachable and create a safe space where they feel comfortable asking for help or making mistakes - because that's where the real learning happens. I check in regularly to answer questions, offer feedback, and help them reflect on their progress.

In my role, I support apprentices' professional development by encouraging good time management, communication, and teamwork. If they face challenges, I help them problem-solve and build resilience rather than stepping in immediately.

Overall, my goal is to help them grow in confidence and capability, while feeling supported throughout their apprenticeship.

Balancing Learning and Work Responsibilities

I help apprentices balance learning and work by making sure they have a clear structure and realistic expectations for both. I regularly check their workload and support them in discussing this with their line manager to adjust tasks where needed to ensure they have enough time for Off-The-Job Training or study.

Time management is key, so I support them in planning ahead - helping them break down deadlines and avoid last-minute pressure.

If they're feeling overwhelmed, we talk about what's causing the stress and find practical solutions together. The goal is to help them succeed in both areas without burning out, by promoting open communication, flexibility, and steady support.

Adapting Management Approach for Apprentices

I previously taught junior-aged pupils and supported Early Career Teachers, which gave me transferable skills for this role. I've since adapted my management style to be more coaching-focused, especially with apprentices who are new to the workplace. We run Apprentice Development Team Days for CPD, and I provide regular feedback to build confidence and guide growth. I also use open questions to encourage reflection and independent thinking. Overall, my approach is developmental - helping apprentices grow both professionally and personally.

Gateway and Assessment Preparation

To prepare apprentices for Gateway and their EPA, I ensure they understand expectations early and regularly review progress with them and their training provider. I also liaise with line managers to ensure apprentices have time to prepare. While EPA prep is mainly led by the provider, our team steps in if issues arise. Providers offer excellent mock sessions and feedback for assessments. My goal is to make sure they feel confident, supported, and ready to showcase their skills.



for successful apprenticeships

MANAGER ADVICE

continued.

Effective Tools and Communication Methods

There are a few tools and approaches that have been especially effective in supporting our apprentices:

- **Regular 1:1 Check-ins:** As Apprenticeship Programme Manager, I check in monthly with them on a formal basis. Our line managers all schedule weekly or biweekly check-ins to discuss progress, challenges, and goals. This creates a consistent space for open communication and support.
- **Training Plan:** We have a training plan that our apprentices use to record their day-to-day learning. This helps them to reflect on their days and weeks to see their progress.
- **Feedback Approach:** I use a coaching-style approach to feedback - asking reflective questions first, then offering guidance. It encourages ownership of their learning and promotes critical thinking.
- **Collaboration with Training Providers:** Keeping open lines of communication with the training provider ensures we're aligned and can jointly support the apprentice with any academic or workplace needs.

Advice for New Apprentice Managers

My advice would be to be patient, supportive, and clear. Apprentices are still learning the basics of the workplace, so take the time to explain things and check in regularly. Keep communication open, give regular feedback, and help them balance work with their studies.

Work closely with the training provider so you understand what's expected and be flexible with time for learning. Most importantly, build their confidence - your support can make a huge difference to their development and success.

Embedding the GATSBY BENCHMARKS



Alison Sadler, EDT Consultant,
The Careers & Enterprise Company

Employers play a vital role in delivering high-quality careers education for apprentices. The Gatsby Benchmarks provide a framework to ensure apprentices are well-prepared for lifelong career success. It is eight Government-backed standards for world-class careers education that provide a framework to ensure apprentices are well-prepared for lifelong career success



HERE'S EIGHT WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN HELP TO MEET THE GATSBY REQUIREMENTS:

1. A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME

- Collaborate with training providers to shape and evaluate their careers strategy and programme.
- Share insights on your sector's skills needs and labour market trends.
- Support apprentices' access to careers activities (e.g. events, mentoring).

2. LEARNING FROM LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION

- Provide real-time insights on career prospects, salaries, and sector trends.
- Help apprentices understand career pathways within your business.
- Support onboarding with Labour Market Information rich discussions.

3. ADDRESSING INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Offer mentoring or buddy systems to support personal and career development.
- Encourage apprentices to reflect on goals and seek additional training.
- Provide inclusive opportunities that challenge stereotypes and raise aspirations.

4. LINKING CURRICULUM TO CAREERS

- Engage in curriculum planning with providers to ensure relevance to job roles.
- Highlight how desired skills and behaviours for your organisation align with occupational standards.
- Offer feedback to tailor learning to business needs.





Embedding the GATSBY BENCHMARKS

CONTINUED...

5. ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES

- Facilitate exposure to different roles within your organisation.
- Host masterclasses, competitions, or talks to broaden apprentices' perspectives.
- Enable networking with suppliers, customers, and industry bodies.

6. EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES

- Provide cross-departmental experiences or job shadowing.
- Support external placements or swaps with other businesses where possible.
- Encourage apprentices to reflect on workplace experiences.

7. ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

- Discuss progression opportunities with apprentices and providers.
- Support lifelong learning through CPD and internal development pathways.
- Encourage career planning beyond the apprenticeship.

8. PERSONAL GUIDANCE

- Allow time for apprentices to access 1:1 careers guidance as required.
- Support early intervention if apprentices are at risk of leaving employment.
- Encourage use of career development plans.

**READ THE UPDATED GATSBY
BENCHMARKS - RECOMMENDED
BY GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE
FROM SEPTEMBER 2025**



So what is Off-The-Job Training?

Sometimes referred to as OTJ or OTJT, for a manager who has not been through the apprenticeship process, this can be confusing.

Off-the-job Training is any learning activity that takes place outside an apprentice's normal work duties but contributes to their apprenticeship. It is the formal learning part of an apprenticeship: time specifically set aside for developing new knowledge, skills and behaviours required by their programme.

This training can include classroom sessions, workshops, e-learning, industry visits or mentoring. Events such as AoA's learning and development sessions at the BIG Apprentice Meet Ups are excellent examples of valuable Off-The-Job Training opportunities. The key point is that these activities must be planned, relevant to the apprenticeship, and separate from regular work tasks.

For managers, understanding Off-The-Job Training matters because it is a mandatory requirement across all UK nations and represents an important investment in your apprentice's development.

Examples of Off-The-Job Training

- Shadowing other members of the team to learn new skills.
- In-house training programmes relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Writing reflective journals.
- Attendance at workshops, training days and webinars relevant to the apprenticeship.
- Completion of online learning modules on AoA Learn, the Association of Apprentices' online learning platform.
- AoA Masterclasses (live or on-demand).
- Self-study that includes reading or watching videos.
- Training in new working practices or on new equipment.
- Role-playing or simulation exercises.
- Industry visits/conferences relevant to apprenticeships such as online and in-person events.
- Writing assessments, assignments and completing projects or activities.
- Practical training or training in the workplace relevant to the apprenticeship.

off-the-job TRAINING

in UK Apprenticeships

Off-The-Job Training is a highly important aspect of apprenticeships throughout the UK. It is defined as learning activities that are not part of an apprentice's day-to-day role, and which support their apprenticeship development.

The approach to Off-The-Job Training varies across the UK's nations:

- **England:** The traditional 20% Off-The-Job Training rule has been replaced. Now, training hours are specific to each apprenticeship standard, allowing for more tailored learning experiences.
- **Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales:** These nations predominantly follow percentage-based apprenticeship models. Apprentices spend designated time at further education colleges or training centres, with frameworks specifying minimum training hours to ensure comprehensive skill development.

A consistent thread across all four nations is the need for documentation. While training providers will guide learners through the recording process, active manager involvement remains crucial in supporting apprentices' learning and development.

Benefits of Off-The-Job Training

- Provides a better understanding of the overall knowledge, skills and behaviours required in the wider industry.
- Promotes a flexible, practical and creative approach to learning – and an opportunity to gain new, transferable skills.
- Provides an environment where learning can be explored in various ways through real-life learning.
- Promotes networking with other apprentices.
- Apprentices gain up-to-date, job-relevant knowledge that they can immediately apply in the workplace.





HOW AOA CAN SUPPORT OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

As line managers, your role in guiding apprentices extends beyond daily work tasks. The Association of Apprentices (AoA) offers a comprehensive suite of resources designed to support apprentices' professional growth and development.

EXPANDING PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

AoA Connect provides apprentices with a dynamic platform to build professional relationships and enhance their career development. Encouraging participation helps apprentices:

- Network nationally
- Discover learning opportunities
- Connect with peers
- Build professional skills

AoA Connect creates meaningful opportunities for apprentices to grow their networks.

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



PERSONALISED LEARNING WITH AOA LEARN

AoA Learn is our innovative learning platform that transforms how organisations support apprentice development. We help partners seamlessly integrate skill-building and career growth through an intuitive, user-friendly system. Our platform enables:

- Easy single sign-on access
- Targeted development programmes
- Career Pulse tracking
- Personalised learning paths

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



CAREER PULSE: PERSONALISED DEVELOPMENT INSIGHTS

Career Pulse on AoA Learn is a self-assessment tool with professional development insights. By completing a quick quiz, apprentices receive:

- Skill level analysis
- Personalised improvement recommendations
- Strengths and growth area mapping

Apprentices can retake the assessment to track progress, transforming self-reflection into strategic development.

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



TARGETED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The Association of Apprentices has developed six specialised development programmes to support apprentices at different stages of their career:

- AoA Career Ready
- AoA Nurturing Your Wellbeing
- AoA Professional Soft Skills
- AoA Career Possibilities & Decisions
- AoA Career Development
- AoA CVs and Applications

**Partners and apprentices
access here**





MORE OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING RESOURCES FROM AOA

PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS

To support apprentices in preparing for their future careers, AoA offers practical tools including:

- [CV 360](#): Create and refine your CV
- [Interview 360](#): Sharpen interview skills
- [Elevator Pitch](#): Perfect quick, persuasive introductions

These resources are designed to help apprentices stand out and prepare for long-term career success.

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



FLEXIBLE LEARNING THROUGH MASTERCLASSES

AoA's On-Demand Masterclasses provide flexible learning opportunities, covering critical topics such as:

- Building personal resilience
- Confident self-presentation
- Industry-specific insights

These expert-led sessions allow apprentices to develop key skills at their own pace, supporting their professional growth.

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



ASSESSMENT SUPPORT

Navigating final assessments can be a critical and potentially stressful period for apprentices. AoA provides support to ensure apprentices are prepared for this important career milestone. This includes workshops, guidance, and expert advice to navigate this critical career milestone. Additionally, our Assessment Hub provides a collaborative online space where apprentices can connect, share experiences, and support each other through their assessment journey.

**Partners and apprentices
access here**



Important Note for Managers

All current and completed apprentices can access these resources free of charge through their AoA membership. For employers and training providers, access to AoA Learn resources is exclusively available to AoA Partners.

By proactively introducing apprentices to these resources, you play a crucial role in their professional development and long-term success.





Supporting Apprentices' Mental Health and Promoting Inclusion in the Workplace



Caroline Fillery
Founder & Finance
Director, Support Connect

Apprenticeships are a vital pathway into meaningful employment, offering opportunities for professional growth, new skills, and long-term careers. Yet alongside these opportunities, many apprentices face unique challenges with having to balance study with work, navigating new environments, and developing their confidence in professional settings.

Line Managers play a critical role in ensuring that apprentices are supported not only to succeed in their roles, but also to thrive as individuals.

At Support Connect, we believe that creating safe, inclusive, and supportive workplaces enables apprentices to thrive. Below are some practical ways that Training Providers and Employers can ensure apprentices feel valued, supported, and equipped to succeed.

1. Create a Supportive Environment

Workplace culture matters. Apprentices who feel welcomed and respected are more likely to engage, contribute, and grow. Managers can:

- Provide structured inductions that explain workplace values and expectations.
- Encourage open communication, ensuring apprentices feel safe to ask questions without fear of judgement.
- Offer regular feedback sessions that focus on strengths and progress, as well as areas for development.

A positive environment where apprentices know they are supported fosters both confidence and commitment.

2. Recognise and Respond to Mental Health Needs

Apprentices may be experiencing stress, anxiety, or other mental health challenges, particularly if they are entering the workplace for the first time. Line Managers can:

- Learn to spot early signs of distress, such as withdrawal, reduced performance, or changes in behaviour.
- Normalise conversations about mental health by checking in regularly and showing empathy.
- Provide flexibility where possible, recognising that pressures inside and outside work can affect wellbeing.

Simple, proactive steps can make a significant difference to an apprentice's ability to cope and thrive.





Supporting Apprentices' Mental Health and Promoting Inclusion in the Workplace



Support Connect's Neurodiversity Screening is discounted for AoA Partners



**By Caroline Fillery
Founder & Finance Director**

3. Promote Inclusion

Inclusion is more than policy, it's daily practice. Apprentices who come from diverse backgrounds or who may have additional needs must feel their contributions are valued.

Managers can:

- Challenge unconscious bias and encourage team members to do the same.
- Adapt training and communication styles to ensure accessibility.
- Celebrate diversity, whether through cultural awareness activities or by highlighting individual strengths.

When apprentices feel included, they are more motivated and engaged in their roles.

4. Encourage Work-Life Balance and Self-Care

Many apprentices juggle workplace responsibilities with study commitments, which can lead to burnout if not managed effectively. Employers and Training Providers can:

- Support apprentices in managing workloads by setting realistic expectations.
- Encourage regular breaks, flexible working where possible, and open dialogue about pressures.
- Model healthy behaviours.

5. Provide Access to Professional Resources

Line Managers don't need to have all the answers. Professional networks and support organisations are available to provide apprentices with guidance and support... Signposting apprentices to these services ensures they know where to turn if they need additional help.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Supporting apprentices' mental health and promoting inclusion is not an "extra", it is essential to developing resilient, confident, and skilled professionals. By fostering supportive environments, recognising needs, embracing inclusion, and connecting apprentices with professional resources, Training Providers and Employers can make a lasting impact on both individual lives and the wider workforce.



PARS

POST-APPRENTICESHIP
RECOGNITION SCHEME

**Empowering Apprentices
and Enriching Organisations**

Line Managers, envision the finish line from day one. Apprentices have spoken, and their message is clear: knowing that their hard work will be valued on completion is a powerful motivator. By introducing the Post-Apprenticeship Recognition Scheme (PARS) early in their journey you're igniting engagement and fuelling determination.

The Association of Apprentices and the Chartered Institution for Further Education have created a professional recognition scheme for qualified apprentices.

The PARS award enables apprentices to use letters after their name. These post-nominals will elevate the status of both the apprentice and the apprenticeship route, raising parity of esteem and building awareness of the impact that qualified apprentices offer.

Benefits of PARS Recognition

For Your Apprentices:

- Enhanced professional credibility through post-nominal letters
- Increased confidence and industry recognition
- Valuable networking with other PARS holders through our Alumni Network
- Improved career advancement opportunities
- The chance to give back to the apprenticeship community

For Your Organisation:

- Better talent retention and engagement
- Strengthened team capabilities and performance
- Enhanced reputation as a development-focused employer
- Greater representation in industry forums

Eligibility

PARS is open to all apprentices (regardless of level or occupational pathway) who:



have their completion
certificate



completed their
apprenticeship in the UK



have the support of their
employer (or an industry-
linked sponsor)

LEARN MORE



THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION
FOR FURTHER EDUCATION



Association of
Apprentices

PARS

POST-APPRENTICESHIP
RECOGNITION SCHEME



THE CHARTERED INSTITUTION
FOR FURTHER EDUCATION



Association of
Apprentices

Supporting Your Apprentices Through PARS

As a line manager, championing your apprentices towards PARS recognition delivers significant value to both your team members and your organisation. PARS acknowledges the achievements and skills developed during apprenticeships, providing formal credentials that boost professional standing.

As seen in

 **2025
IMPACT
REPORT**

“The PARS recognition and the use of post-nominal letters have greatly boosted my confidence in both my workplace and the wider hospitality industry.”



“Including my post-nominal letters in email signatures, LinkedIn profile, or project documents quickly communicates my formal qualifications to industry professionals. Colleagues who are also recognised or understand such credentials tend to show greater respect for my skills and contributions. I am seen as someone with established expertise, which allows me to contribute more effectively to team goals and strategic decisions.”

-Adrian Kobak MIH CHA, Meetings and Events Operations Manager, Pan Pacific Hotel London



“The PARS award encouraged me to share my apprenticeship journey at my former sixth form college, so that Business A Level students had a greater awareness of the options available to them. I was amazed at how many people were actively thinking about completing an apprenticeship. I left feeling incredibly hopeful for the future of apprenticeships.

I have attended events hosted by the Association of Apprentices and I met other PARS award holders there. It was energising to hear the career journeys and aspirations of those present.”

-Charlie Stevens CHA, Engineer, Arqiva

NCFE

We would like to take the opportunity to thank NCFE for their charitable PARS bursary programme and early adopters supporting their apprentices through PARS.



Gateley /



[Click here for more information](#)



resources for

LINE MANAGERS

WELCOME TO YOUR ASSOCIATION



OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING FROM GOV.UK

To find out more about Off-The-Job Training and how to record it, access further information [here](#) (pdf, 55 pages).



MENTAL HEALTH

On [AoA Learn](#), partners can access mental health resources which are available at the click of a button.



AOA IMPACT

Read AoA's latest insights in our 2025 Impact Report. Find out more about the apprentice community, [here](#).



MANAGING AN APPRENTICE

From Government Communication Service (GCS). Adapt [this handy guide](#) to suit your needs.



CATCH UP ON VIMEO

Did you miss our webinar 'How coaching skills can help line managers'? [Watch it now](#).



EVENTS

AoA hosts events for the wider apprenticeship ecosystem including a series for line managers of apprentices. Keep an eye out on the [events page](#) of the website and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) to register.



TIPS FROM A TRAINING PROVIDER

Lifetime provides inside information about supporting apprentices in the workplace. Read it [here](#).

how effective are you as a MANAGER?

JUST FOR FUN!



INSTRUCTIONS:

Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 for each statement, where:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

QUESTIONS:

RATING SCALE:

I regularly schedule one-on-one meetings with my apprentices to discuss their progress and concerns.

I provide clear and constructive feedback to help my apprentices improve their skills.

I encourage my apprentices to take on challenging tasks that stretch their abilities.

I am familiar with the specific learning objectives and Off-The-Job Training requirements of my apprentice's programme.

I actively create opportunities for my apprentices to network.

I ensure that my apprentices have access to the resources they need for their learning and development.

I am approachable and make time to address any concerns or questions my apprentices may have.

I celebrate the achievements and milestones of my apprentices.

I advocate for my apprentices within the organisation and help them gain visibility.

I encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement within my team.

I ensure the workload aligns with my apprentices' programmes.

I actively promote and support the additional needs of apprentices including mental health and well-being.

I foster a collaborative environment where apprentices can learn from their peers and other team members, and vice versa.

I regularly assess the workload of my apprentices to ensure a balance between work and learning.

I actively seek feedback from my apprentices on how I can better support their development.

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
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how effective are you as a MANAGER?

JUST FOR FUN!



SCORING GUIDE

Add up your scores from all 15 questions to get your total.

- **60-75 points: Exceptional Apprentice Manager**

You're doing an outstanding job supporting your apprentices! Your approach fosters a positive learning environment and helps apprentices thrive. Keep up the excellent work and consider sharing your best practices with other managers.

- **45-59 points: Effective Apprentice Manager**

You're on the right track with your apprentice management skills. There's room for improvement, but you're providing good support. Focus on areas where you scored lower to enhance your effectiveness.

- **30-44 points: Developing Apprentice Manager**

You have a foundation to build upon, but there's significant room for improvement. Review the areas where you scored lower and create an action plan to enhance your support for apprentices.

- **15-29 points: Needs Improvement**

Your current approach may not be providing adequate support for your apprentices. It's crucial to reassess your management style and seek additional training or guidance on effectively managing apprentices.

NEXT STEPS

1. Reflect on your scores and identify areas where you can improve.
 2. Discuss your results with your peers or supervisor to gain additional insights.
 3. Create an action plan to address any weak areas.
 4. Consider seeking additional training or resources on apprentice management.
 5. Retake this quiz in 3-6 months to track your progress.
- Remember, effective apprentice management is an ongoing process.

By continually striving to improve, you're not only helping your apprentices succeed but also contributing to the overall success of your organisation and the apprenticeship programme.



THANK YOU



WITH THANKS TO

All of AoA's Founding Partners,
Advisory Partners and Corporate
Partners

AoA's Apprentice Leadership Council
AoA Members
The Careers and Enterprise Company
Mitie
OAL
Support Connect

Some contributions may have been edited for
length and/or clarity.



**We're enhancing the
apprentice experience across
the UK thanks to our partners,
supporters, and the
organisations who champion
apprenticeship opportunities
for every learner.**

Together, we're not just
developing skills, we're creating
pathways to professional
excellence for all.