



Helpful Information for Professionals working with 15 to 24 year olds in Norfolk and Suffolk

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March 2023

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Please contact the Apprenticeships New Anglia team on 01603 737739 to discuss individual situations.



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Introduction

Over the last 5 years, Apprenticeship policy, delivery and funding have all been reformed and this has led to significant changes in opportunity for 16 to 24 year olds.

In addition, the reforms have been a game-changer for SME employers seeking to engage with Apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships New Anglia was created to support SME engagement with Apprenticeships for 16 to 24 year olds. The information in this document is based on the learning from the project and is designed to dispel myths and ensure that information, advice and guidance takes current limitations and opportunities into consideration.

This document is not designed for employers or for young people directly, but is, instead, intended to be used by those delivering information, advice, guidance, mentoring and support about Apprenticeships.

The information included in this document could quickly become outdated, so we encourage caution when using this without clarification in the future. The team at Apprenticeships New Anglia are available at contactus@apprenticeshipsnewanglia.co.uk or by phone on 01603 737739 should you need to check on the current position at any point in the future.



1. Availability of Training

Right Training

Availability of training is very much dependent upon market forces as the DfE no longer actively commission apprenticeship training based on demand. In previous decades, there were local teams within the Training and Enterprise Councils and Learning and Skills Councils that sought to ensure that the right mix of apprenticeship training was commissioned annually through controls on provider contracts.

For a few years, providers were able to choose the standards they wanted to deliver, with very little control from central Government, who believed that, "the market would decide." The expectation was that Apprenticeship Providers would understand and identify employer demand and would adjust their offer to attract additional business. In reality however, this led to providers choosing to deliver the training that was delivered the highest return on investment for them.

Although the DfE have recently been controlling the market more effectively with new providers having to identify unmet demand, historically there is still massive imbalance in the system, often skewed to those Apprenticeship standards that command a high price band and require minimal investment in infrastructure to deliver. This goes some way to explaining the proliferation of management qualifications at higher level since 2018.

When deciding upon the standards to be delivered, providers also have to take into consideration the cost and availability of teaching staff. This is significantly more challenging where remuneration for working in the field significantly outweighs that offered for teaching the subject. A current example of this is for level 3 Installation/Maintenance Electrician where salaries for tutors are around £30,000 but the base salary on Indeed for a practicing Electrician is £36,642. This has created a lack of supply for electrical places in Norfolk and Suffolk, and means that, at the time of writing, all the colleges are already oversubscribed for September 2023.

Right Place

Accessibility of training is not necessarily a new phenomenon in Norfolk and Suffolk as rurality always causes accessibility problems. Since the pandemic, many Apprenticeship sessions are delivered remotely over Teams or Zoom, but this has caused additional challenges for people without access to a quality internet signal or the device to study on. We have seen examples of apprentices trying to complete assignments on their phones, which leads to poor quality work and additional frustrations for apprentice, employer and trainer. We have the facility to loan equipment as part of our project, but accessibility of the internet is still crucial to success.

For Apprenticeships where workshop time/space is required, the colleges have to balance the demand from apprentices against other programme needs such as T Levels and Study Programmes, -probably why the percentage of Apprenticeships delivered nationally by colleges keeps falling year on year. The independent training providers are seeking new ways to manage demand, with companies delivering remotely from mobile workshops in vans, but this too presents difficulties as not all businesses have space to accommodate a van once a month so making access to and apprentice to complete their off the job learning challenging. In addition, because the learning is delivered 1:1, there is no opportunity for group interaction which some young people will benefit greatly from.



Right Time

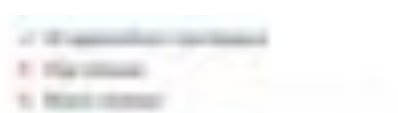
Apprenticeships are jobs, and demand for employment is fundamentally driven by the economy and not by educational timetabling.

Again, the variation in terms of availability of training at different times of the year is currently driven by provider logistics. Apprenticeship programmes that are delivered as roll on, roll off tend to be those that do not have face to face training delivery and do not require workshop time. Standards like Customer Service Specialist, Care Worker, Business Administrator or Marketing Assistant are much more likely to be offered as roll on, roll off, with programmes such as Electrical Installation, Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician and Groundworker likely to be September Starts only. In some cases, you will find that Colleges can only offer September (and sometimes January) starts, whereas Independent Training Provider will have more flexible start dates.

Find Apprenticeship Training

Find Apprenticeship Training is part of GOV.UK and allows users to search for a particular Apprenticeship Standard and then see who may be delivering this in a particular location.

There are some limitations to the system as it currently exists, and these have the potential to lull the user into a false sense of security.

1. The system is reliant upon the Apprenticeship providers keeping it updated, and sometimes they do not do this regularly.
 2. Some providers mis-represent the location they are delivering from by using postcodes for venues like libraries, or other landmarks. This is a marketing ploy to be seen as local when they are not.
 3. The system details the method of delivery but it is not always accurate as the provider ticking the "at apprentice's workplace" does not necessarily mean that they will deliver this across the country.
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4. Additionally, the major issue with this system is that providers who are already full, with no capacity for additional delivery will still show up on the system as delivering. In practice, when an employer contacts them, they will typically advise them they are being, "added to a waiting list", to prevent them losing the lead to a competitor. This often results in an employment outcome for the individual with no Apprenticeship outcome possible.

Recommendations

1. When advising young people who are considering an Apprenticeship, it may be prudent to mention the competition for training places for, "trade", based roles.
2. In the past, providers have supported young people into Apprenticeship jobs, but this is not now something that most providers do. Young people are likely to be advised that they need to, "find an employer", and then come back to them. Apprenticeships New Anglia was set up to deliver this service and young people can apply through us if they need help.
3. It is probably especially important to check travel/transport routes to the job and to the provider with the YP, as both have to be accessible. Meeting 07:30 starts is often an issue.
4. Beware of the Functional Skills trap. Now that places are more competitive, cherry picking is rife. Providers should be assessing ability, not previous qualifications, however most will try to specify 4 or above in maths and English as this negates the need to deliver Functional Skills.



Prior Learning Issues

It is often the case that young people aged 16 and 17 who are seeking an Apprenticeship often end up taking a Study Programme course as an alternative when they transition from compulsory education. However changes to the way in which prior learning is assessed for those subsequently beginning Apprenticeships can now have a detrimental effect on progression from study programme to Apprenticeship for these young people.

Government has now stipulated, within the funding rules, how accreditation of prior learning must be calculated to reduce the cost of the Apprenticeship standard where it exists. For programmes where the majority of the learning is delivered 1:1, then providers are usually willing to reduce these costs, but where an Apprenticeship is delivered in day or block release, and has been costed accordingly, providers are often unwilling to accept young people with prior learning due to the economics. If you have a cohort of 10 engineers, and 4 have prior learning and do not need to sit one of the modules, as a provider you still have to provide that learning to the remaining 6, therefore, funding for this unit is reduced by 2/5ths, thus putting a strain on budgets.

In addition to this, where an Apprenticeship provider establishes that there is less than 1 years learning left to deliver to an apprentice with prior learning, this precludes them from the Apprenticeship completely.

Given that in the majority of cases, the employer opts for Apprenticeship recruitment to be managed via the Apprenticeship Provider, it is possible that some providers may take prior learning into consideration when drawing up a shortlist for the employer. This would not happen with Apprenticeships New Anglia, as we manage all our recruitment directly, but it is something that advisers need to be aware of when helping young people to make choices that won't later disadvantage them in the marketplace.

The situation regarding T Levels is rather more complicated, especially in areas like Construction, where the Apprenticeship Standard for most trades including Bricklayers, Painter and Decorators and Groundworkers are at level 2 and Plumbing and Electrical Installation are at Level 3. The T Level website suggests that the T Level in Building Services Engineering for Construction is an entry route to the following:



The links from this site will take you to pages from the National Careers Service that promote progression from a T Level to Apprenticeships at level 2 and 3, giving real life current examples. The T Level has a 9 Week work placement, but takes 2 years to complete, and the Electrical Apprenticeship is usually 4 years long. In taking a T Level at 16, the young person will likely gain no more than 9 weeks onsite experience, leaving them trying to negotiate an Apprenticeship at the same level as the T Level at the end in order to achieve occupational competence.

T Levels are often being portrayed as a route into a Higher or Degree Level Apprenticeship, and in some sectors, this is entirely possible. In others, it is likely that if a young person is looking to progress from T Level to Apprenticeship at the same, or in some cases at a lower level, then the reduction in funding from prior learning could prevent this from happening.

Recommendation

Where young people are choosing to go onto a Study Programme or a T Level, and their aspiration is to become a "tradesperson", they need to understand that choices made at 16, may limit their options at 18+



Legal Constraints

Working Time Directive

The Working Time Directive imposes legal limits on the hours and days someone under the age of 18 can work. These limits apply after the last Friday in June in the year that the young person leaves statutory education until their 18th Birthday.

Young people under 18 are not allowed to work for more than 4 1/2 hours without a break of at least 30 minutes and must not work more than 8 hours a day. They must have 2 consecutive days off each week and there is no opt-out option. The 6 hours a week they spend doing off the job learning as an apprentice also counts towards their 40 hours and, if they have a second job, it is the total of both jobs, not each one separately that must be taken into account.

For some sectors, there are compatibility issues, for example, for apprentices who are placed working with a qualified working in a peripatetic role, such as a Domestic Heating Engineer, the apprentice will spend time travelling between jobs and this will all eat into the 8 hours a day limit. In addition, if the apprentice reports to a depot or workshop in the morning, the travel time to the first job also counts. All of this creates a feeling with some employers that 16 and 17 year olds are not a viable option for these Apprenticeships, and therefore target those 18+ who are legally allowed to opt out of the 48 hour limit.

Health and Safety

There are certain things that 16 and 17 year olds are not legally allowed to do in the workplace, but legal prohibitions are not that common. For a legal prohibition, the law has to specifically state that, "people under the age of 18 must not" In most cases, Health and Safety law instead says that employers must assess the risks, taking into account the individuals lack of experience and maturity. Please see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/young-workers/employer/risks.htm>

Sadly, some employers will apply the ultimate control measure and choose not to employ 16 or 17 year olds in high risk environments to limit risk. As far as I am aware, legal precedent has not been set on this practice, but ACAS do now advise that employers may be allowed to treat people differently because of their age, "when employing people under 18" and give examples of requiring people to be 18+ because of the physical demands of the job.

Some employers will advise that they cannot employ under 18's due to a clause in their business insurance. Whilst it is possible that a business has negotiated a reduction in premium by choosing to add an exclusion, the Association of British Insurers have agreed with their members that young people on work experience, placement or an Apprenticeship, will be treated as an employee, so it is unlikely that there will be a blanket exclusion. That said, the ABI also advises all employers to contact their insurers before taking on an apprentice or a student on work placement to ensure that they policy covers this. With Apprenticeships New Anglia, our pre-placement checks ensure that all our apprentices are routinely covered by their employer/host employer liability insurance.



Funding Constraints

Increases in National Minimum Wage (NMW)

The minimum wage for an apprentice in the UK has been steadily increasing over the last 5 years and is due to rise above £5 per hour for the first time in April 2023. From 2022, the apprentice rate matched the 16 and 17 rate for the first time.

This rate applies to apprentices regardless of their age in the 1st year of their training, with those over 19 having to be paid NMW for their age from their 2nd year. The Low Pay Commission have stated in their November 2022 report that they intend to consider if there is a need for an Apprenticeship rate at all in the longer term, which would mean all apprentices being entitled to the minimum wage for their age from day one.

At Apprenticeships New Anglia, we always try to promote fair pay and actively encourage employers to reward progress and success, we also have to remember that employers do pay their apprentices for the time they spend in learning as well as working on the job. In the early days of an Apprenticeship, before employers have seen a return on their investment, the lower Apprenticeship rate does currently offset paid time for learning, so we are unsure if removing this may generate more jobs without training.

In many cases, apprentices start on a higher wage anyway, as employers have recently recognised the need to complete for staff in a tight labour market.

Banding Limits

Each Apprenticeship standard has a funding band allocated and this determines the maximum amount of funding the Government will pay towards the Apprenticeship. The funding bands do seem overly generous in some sectors, and very tight in others and this will likely determine availability of training and assessment. Bands range from £2500 for Public Service Operational Delivery Officer to £27,000 for a Boatbuilder. The funding band can be viewed on the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education website.

5% contribution

If a company is not a levy payer, then they will usually have to reserve funding on, "The Apprenticeship Service", website and pay a 5% contribution. If young people are looking at high value Apprenticeships and have sourced their own employer, this could mean the employer being asked to pay over £1,000 as a contribution to the training. It is possible to ask a levy paying business to transfer funding to the small business using a levy transfer, and this is how most Apprenticeships New Anglia Apprenticeships are funded. We have over £1m of levy transfer spent or committed to currently, and can support employers through our Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agency model if they would rather opt for a, "managed service"

The limit of 10

It is important for non levy payers to know that they are limited to 10 Apprenticeship starts using the funding reservation systems, so, should they need additional starts, we can assist through our Flexi Job Apprenticeship approach, where we are the employer and utilise our levy transfer commitments to ensure funding is available.

EPA costs and resits

Once an employer, apprentice and provider all agree that they are ready, the apprentice will, "go through the gateway", and will be registered for End Point Assessment. At this point, the provider will receive the remaining 20% of the total funding for that Apprenticeship and will pay for the EPA service. Should the apprentice not pass this EPA, all providers write into their contracts that the employer must pay for any resit costs, however, in reality, some less scrupulous employers will refuse to pay and the apprentice will lose their opportunity to complete. When Apprenticeships New Anglia engages with a Training Provider, we try to negotiate a free retake if required, but to date, we have had no failures at EPA as we ensure readiness through our review process.



Other Options for Employment with Training

Moore Networking, the social enterprise that project manages the Apprenticeships New Anglia project, and TrAC, the Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agency, are currently looking at investing in the development of a service that would employ and place young people who are on study programmes, T Levels and other forms of post 16 learning in part time paid work alongside their studies. This would mean that the individuals could, "earn and learn", regardless of if they are on an actual Apprenticeship.

This model is designed to ensure that young people can apply their learning in a real life employment opportunity alongside their studies, and we hope to then progress these young people into an Apprenticeship at the end of their current programme of studies.

Our experience and expertise in the delivery of TrAC and Apprenticeships New Anglia will enable us to deliver this service, which we hope to have up and running by Summer of 2023. Initially we will focus on the sectors where we know employer demand exists, but we hope to expand this model so that all young people who are ready for, and would like to work alongside their studies, can do so.

This new extension to our services is part of the plan to invest in our delivery in the community as a social enterprise, and we hope that this will reduce the numbers of young people going into jobs without training in Norfolk and Suffolk in the future.

More details will be made available on our social media and websites in due course as our plans progress to support more 16 to 24 year olds in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Apprenticeships for those with additional learning or support needs

Special considerations are made in the Apprenticeship funding rules for those who have either an existing or previously issued education, health and care plan, a statement of special educational need or a learning difficulty assessment. This cannot be self declared, and the young person will have to produce evidence to the provider.

Young people who meet this criteria, and who the provider considers could achieve all other aspects of the Apprenticeship, may be exempt from the usual requirement for Functional Skills at L1 (for a level 2 Apprenticeship) or (L2 for a level 3 Apprenticeship) as long as they can achieve Entry Level 3 Functional Skills by the end of the Apprenticeship. The provider must evidence that, even with additional support, the YP would not be able to achieve the expected standard within the projected time frame. The judgement must be formal, and must be conducted within 8 weeks of the apprentice starting their training.

The above can apply to English, maths or both dependent upon the needs of the young person.

Looked After Children and Care Leavers

The grant for care leavers aged under 25 beginning their Apprenticeship is paid after 60 days on programme. The apprentice should receive this within 90 days. The rate for this grant has recently been increased to £3,000. It is a one-off payment, so each YP can only claim it once. Written evidence from a Local Authority confirming the young persons status as a Care Leaver is sufficient to claim this grant. Applications are made through the Training Provider.

Often, young people with SEN, or those who are care leavers, need additional help and support to remain engaged on their Apprenticeship. Providers are able to apply for Additional Learning Support funding, and organisations like Apprenticeships New Anglia are able to provide wraparound pastoral support.

It is often the case that these young people may need a support worker advocating for them with Apprenticeship Providers or employers. Apprenticeships New Anglia team members are used to delivering this service to ensure that young people are all treated fairly and according to their needs.



Troubleshooting

We have created this table to act as a reference where common issues arise with Apprenticeships, and we hope that this will help to provide support for advisers, individuals and employers.

Issue	Who does this affect	Possible Actions
Training not available/ listed on GOV site	Young Person Employer	Often not all of a providers offer is shown on the GOV site. Try googling the name of the Apprenticeship standard or checking individual Provider sites. Contact the team at Apprenticeships New Anglia who may be able to identify a national provider
Apprenticeship place reserved by ,“course not running”.	Young Person Employer	Check on Find Apprenticeship Training for an alternative. Contact the team at Apprenticeships New Anglia who may be able to support the employer through our relationships with national providers. Look for a study programme alternative and link this with a paid work placement through Apprenticeships New Anglia as a pre-Apprenticeship.
Entry Requirements are prohibitive.	Young Person	If the Young Person has an EHCP, contact the provider and remind them that special rules apply for this group. Make a referral to Apprenticeships New Anglia (with the permission of the YP). Click register at www.apprenticeshipsnewanglia.org and choose make a referral option.
Yong person’s family needs to continue to claim child benefit.	Young Person Family	Look for a study programme alongside a pre-apprenticeship placement with Apprenticeships New Anglia. A young person’s family will then keep their child benefit until they turn 18 or progress into an Apprenticeship.
Young person is not able to find an employer	Young Person	Refer that young person, with their consent, to Apprenticeships New Anglia so that our Business
Young Person/Employer is advised they are on a waiting list by the provider	Young Person Employer	Suggest the employer contacts the provider and asks for details of how oversubscribed the programme is. Check GOV and apply to any other providers within travel distance, even if there is a waiting list with all. Refer to Apprenticeships New Anglia who may have national provider contact that can help.
Young Person does not meet grade requirements	Young Person	Contact the training provider and specifically ask for them to deliver functional skills. Check if initial assessment is met.