

Strode College: Apprenticeship Toolkit

**Effective employer engagement in a
rural area**



Project participants

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Providers

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Other stakeholders

Association of Colleges (AoC)
National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
Somerset Employment and Skills Board
Job Centre plus
Somerset County Council (14-19)

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1. Introduction

Strode College had led a consortium of Apprenticeship providers cross county through to a resounding success in delivery of new apprentice places in 2011. A challenge of securing 100 new apprentice places in 100 days had secured 515 by the final celebration.

This consortium was keen to retain momentum and impact and embarked on a second project with greater success against clear goals. However, the need remained to address learning issues from both projects. This is specifically the dual need to fully and further engage with micro businesses which form the backbone of the county economy, and where appropriate to secure a financial commitment by way of employer contribution in addition to wages which can form a big percentage of costs in small businesses. The themes adopted reflect this dual challenge.

About the project

There are distinct barriers to the effective provision (sale and delivery) of Apprenticeships in rural areas where micro businesses predominate. Many of these have become further evident in local campaigns as the apprentice imperative from the Coalition Government has grown.

This project was to research, including via any new local evidence and previous informed reports, those precise obstacles in the current 2012 economy. We then established structures and skills to overcome those issues.

The key areas to address by the group were selected:

- the improvement of the employer journey towards recruitment, to help perception of paperwork and procedural problems;
- the improvement of the applicant support and experience;
- a jargon free presentation; and
- improved questioning techniques and interactions whilst engaged with the employer via a toolkit of support to ensure a consistency and quality of delivery.

Methodology

The group completed a survey amongst local businesses, as to their perceived barriers of taking on Apprenticeships.

These results were analysed together with secondary research discussed at meetings, in order to determine a way forward.

The way forward included a sales training session and production of a toolkit to help all participants deliver a consistent Apprenticeship messages to employers across Somerset.

2. Barriers to Apprenticeships

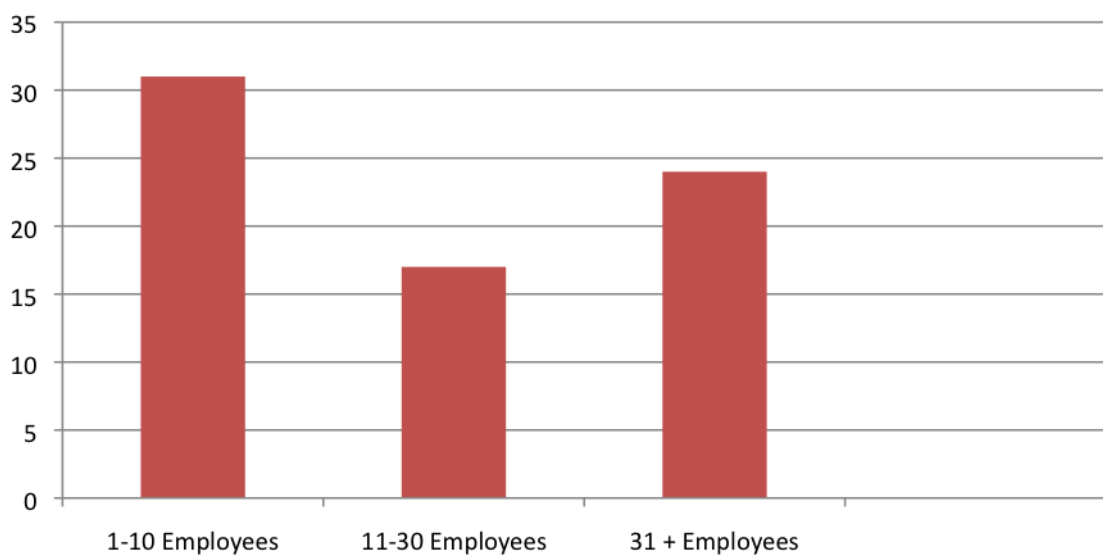
Apprenticeship survey conducted through Survey Monkey.

Results as from 14th March 2012: 72 replies.

Please note that not all 72 customers answered the questions asked.

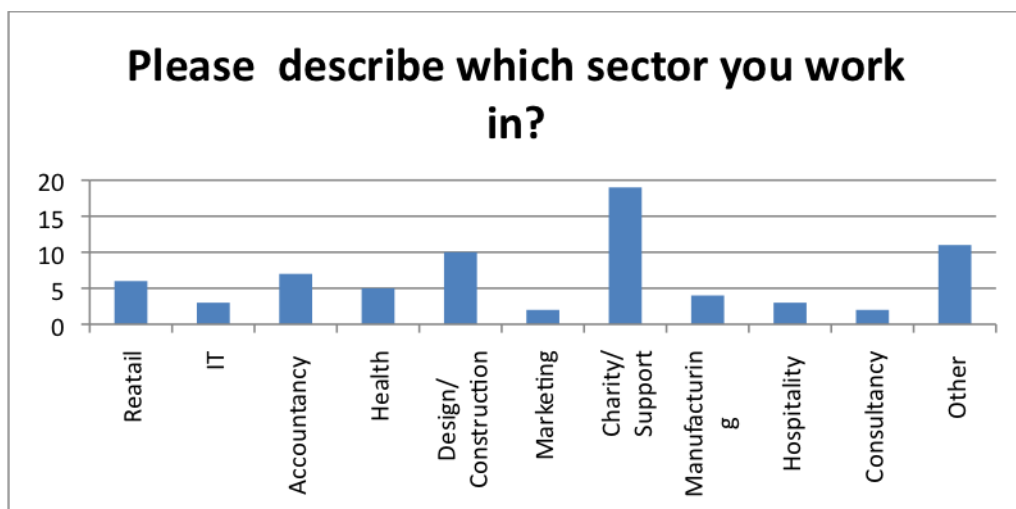
Question 1

How many people work in your business?

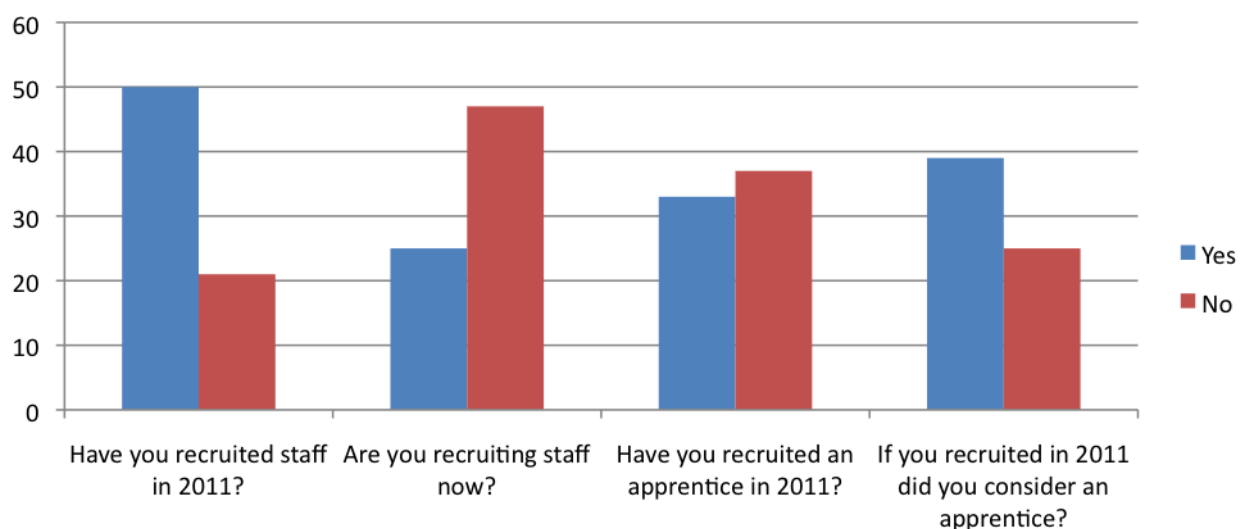


Question 2

Please describe which sector you work in?



Question 3



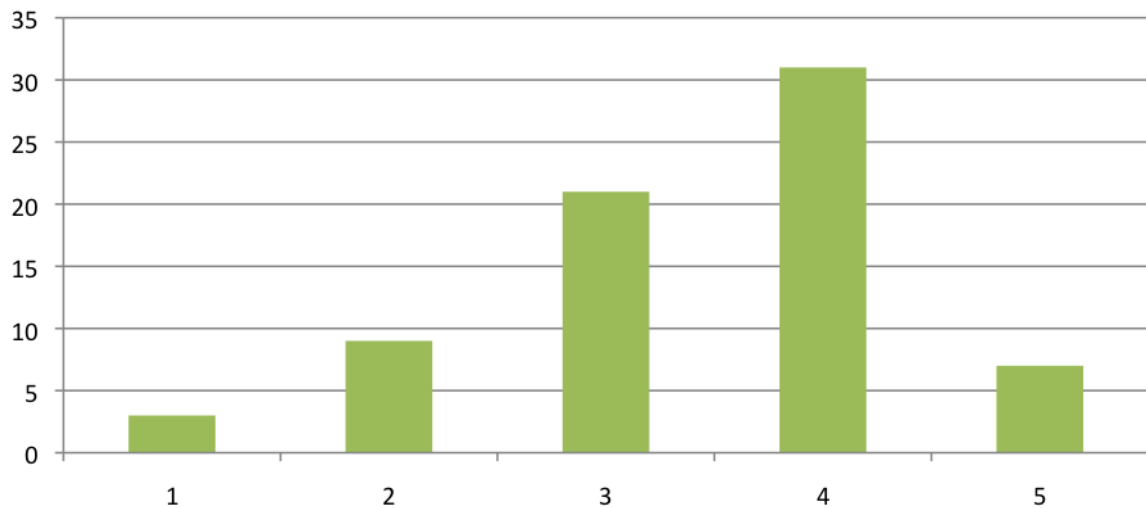
Question 7

If no, please state why not?

Experience	A Small Business	Staffing	Other Reasons
Bad past experience	I would not be big enough. I am retired. Just looking to help a small business provide me with a small amount of work	Recruiting and training our own professional staff	Well established 'non apprentice' rate
Needed experience	We are not large enough and our business covers a wide range of disciplines	One post specifically, other posts no	Didn't but good idea
The job roles recruited for needed specific past experiences		Have enough staff at the moment	Am now considering it
		The council needed to take on skilled labour.	Apprentice started in 2012

Question 8

On a scale of 1-5 (Where 1 is 'not at all' and 5 is 'excellent') how would you rate your knowledge about apprenticeships?



Question 9

There are various perceived barriers to recruiting apprentices. Please select the main three from the list below which may apply to you if you were interested now or in the future?

Knowledge of apprentices	24.2%	15
Cost	38.7%	24
Paperwork + recruiting	40.3%	25
No space/office/facilities	19.4%	12
No apprenticeship relevant to my business	16.1%	10

Health and safety	17.7%	11
Tried it before, did not work	8.1%	5
Work in variable, not really suitable	16.1%	10
Transport and access	29.0%	18
No real advantage	6.5%	4
Adverse impact on time and business	24.2%	15

Question 10

Whilst the list above is the more common themes, please add any below which are relevant to you and not on the list.

- It does take some time to recruit if you do so properly and thoroughly, which we do. The other disadvantage is the time taken to train and support the apprentice, but that would apply to any new appointee, and in our view it has been worth the investment. We hope it is worth it for the apprentice too. We did wonder if the work would be relevant to a business apprentice when we first got involved, but it is and we are very pleased we embarked on the programme.
- Lack of opportunities to offer permanent employment at end of apprenticeship.
- The 16-20 year old attitude, all too much hassle.
- We deliver care to people in their own homes, mostly lone working and transport is essential, with majority of workers on a zero hours contract as length of care packages range from 1 hr to many years. There is little opportunity for the constant level of supervision and development, also there

is no scope in the funding we receive to deliver the packages to cost in the day release times required.....however we are considering apprentices for office positions and are actively seeking a solution with other agencies to establish a training area within the localised sector.

- Public Sector currently has a recruitment freeze therefore unable to expand currently.
- Unable to find the right apprentice - very frustrating considering how many jobless there are supposed to be.
- Time required by existing staff to train apprentices.
- We have been exceptionally fortunate with the calibre of candidate we recruited in 2010 and therefore most of the perceived barriers are not applicable.
- None of the above apply - I am happy to recruit the Apprentices.
- We have struggled getting information to the correct young people. Colleges have been a barrier and will not advertise to their students as they see it as direct competition.
- Quality of training and reputation of providers offering doubt.
- To some managers within our organisation it is not a route that they would think of, often replacing like with like.
- Possible inability to offer job at end of placement even if they were good.
- Perception by GPs that young people are not suited to working in this environment.
- Quality of potential apprentices available.
- Sustaining employment after apprenticeship ended. Lack of knowledge on process, recruitment.
- College training support is paramount.
- Difficult to 'share' the work especially when working on clients promises.
- Timing when we recruit.
- Not enough candidates, over 17years old.
- The teenagers we've employed before have had very bad attitudes towards work, they seem to want more than they give. They seem to be under the impression they are doing me (the employer) a favour by coming to work and that's enough. No real interest in learning a trade and working hard.

Subsequently they leave and go onto benefits. Also funding promised by CITB is very hard to get hold of and requires endless paperwork. Funding of £1000 upon taking an apprentice was promised by Somerset skills but later withdrawn as 'the pot had run out'. Definitely an incentive not to take an apprentice again.

- Insufficient work to justify recruiting another worker.
- I've had 2 apprentices in the past, 1 had good GCSE's and was fantastic, the latter lacked education and knowledge generally. The wage is OK if they live at home and get support - I had a 17 year old who lived in a flat and kept asking me for money - perhaps it should be means tested?

Question 11

What two key changes could be introduced locally or by the government, which might encourage you to take an apprentice?

1. Explain in the literature how the costs work and more clearly the help and support available.
2. Not applicable as we have taken one - in 2010 and in 2011.
3. A grant would be good.
4. More advice to employer on their course i.e.: training. 2 - College training to be more in depth and more theory based.
5. More support for employers with funding for apprentice wages!!
6. Special H&S umbrella to cover them.
7. We were voted in the top 100 employers of apprentices in 2011 so no encouragement needed!
8. Clarity about supply and demand - too many providers chasing the same employers.
9. Making the course more tailored to the company/ apprentice & not set modules.
10. Increased knowledge of courses available, benefits to apprentice and employer.
11. Funding and support extended information about the ease of recruiting/employment.
12. Apprenticeship funding should be separated so there are more incentives for older apprentices - for example people retraining to become a profession or young parents wanting to get back in the work place.

13. Allow for the technical certificate and functional skills to be undertaken on F/Time college based courses, with employers being able to engage when they are ready to undertake the vocational elements of their programme. We would be able to employ train and assess competence for that element on a full wage, with a real job and real prospects for development where appropriate - current restrictions on the achievement during access to apprenticeships is the restrictor for us.
14. Not applicable - we have taken several.
15. More publicity to employers indicating that there would be no costs.
16. I think Apprenticeships are normally associated with vocational subjects (Mechanics, hairdressing etc) the fact that apprenticeships are available in a very broad range of career paths should be better publicised. Having experience of Apprentices, we know that the amount of paperwork and intrusion into the work place is not that great but i think a lot of people think they will need to spend a lot of time with the Apprentice over and above a normal employee. Better promotion of exactly what an employer needs to do could help this.
17. More structured recruitment/careers system to match the candidate to the vacancy.
18. Allowance to businesses to enable staff to be freed up to train apprentices. Other financial incentives.
19. Financial incentive.
20. Provide apprenticeships for book keepers to qualify with ICB.
21. Drop the minimum wage for apprentices in the first 6-12 months to take account of training time (doesn't affect us by will others) Encourage apprenticeships as a respectable and viable alternative to university in schools and building links between apprenticeships further qualifications and being able to bolt on degrees at the end if they wish, so that able children consider it an attractive alternative. The impression given in many schools is still that not going to university is seen as failure to achieve.
22. A way of contacting all young people about vacancies available. As some young people don't even consider an apprenticeship and don't look on the apprenticeship website.
23. Sector specific training and not just the usual business admin or tradesman related courses.
24. The highest positive impact is local providers that provide clarity of cost and program. Providers that ensure quality and avoid the "quick" apprentice or a previously short course re badges as apprentice. Local word of mouth as positive stories is effective.
25. We have taken on 2 in last 15 months so doesn't really apply to us.

26. N/A persuaded GPs to allow me to recruit an apprentice so if this appointment is successful I will consider this again in the future.
27. Grant schemes.
28. Course funding, help to sole traders with HR issues especially employee contracts etc.
29. Better industry recognised training with there course.
30. More funding - tax breaks to take them on i.e. bottom line benefit.
31. Support for small voluntary sector organisations.
32. More funding if it wasn't full time commitment.
33. Money training support.
34. Database with their skills
35. I'm retiring next year.
36. Pay.
37. NI waver.
38. None.
39. Possibly introduction though work experience - we want people to do well and stay.
40. N/A - too small.
41. Lower costs Free 3-6 month trial.
42. If the government introduced apprenticeships that paid minimum wage during training for older people looking to learn a new skill.
43. Easier access to funding. Kids leaving school need to better understand the value of work. The focus at the moment seems to be on further education whereas its taxpayers we need not students.
44. Grants & Grants to help with the costs.
45. Better financial support for the time and effort put in. certainly having to pay a training fee to SS&L is not helpful when we only want to offer someone an opportunity. If we take on an apprentice they are supernumary with a view to us needing them at the end of their apprenticeship.

- 46. Funding, not just pay but also transport costs, protective clothing and footwear, training costs.
- 47. To be over 18. Have a minimum of 5 GCSE's grade C and above including English and Maths.

3. How to use the Toolkit for selling Apprenticeships

1. Read the Sales Toolkit for Selling Apprenticeships and discuss this with your line manager to check understanding

2. Visit an employer accompanied by your line manager or a member of the sales team

You will need to:

- Research the company to be visited (section 4.1)
- Complete research for section 4.2
- Discuss this with whoever you are shadowing on the visit
- Attend the meeting as an observer
 - make notes at the meeting to record what you think are the essential facts the employer has discussed about their business

3. Feedback meeting

- When you return to your organisation, discuss your notes with whoever you have shadowed
- Listen to what they have recorded/feel is important
- Write up a visit report or ONA (organisational needs analysis)
- What do you think would be the solution? Make recommendations as to what you would offer the employer and discuss these

At this point, depending on how the first visit shadow went, and how confident you feel, you can either do another visit shadow, or:

4. Conduct your own employer visit

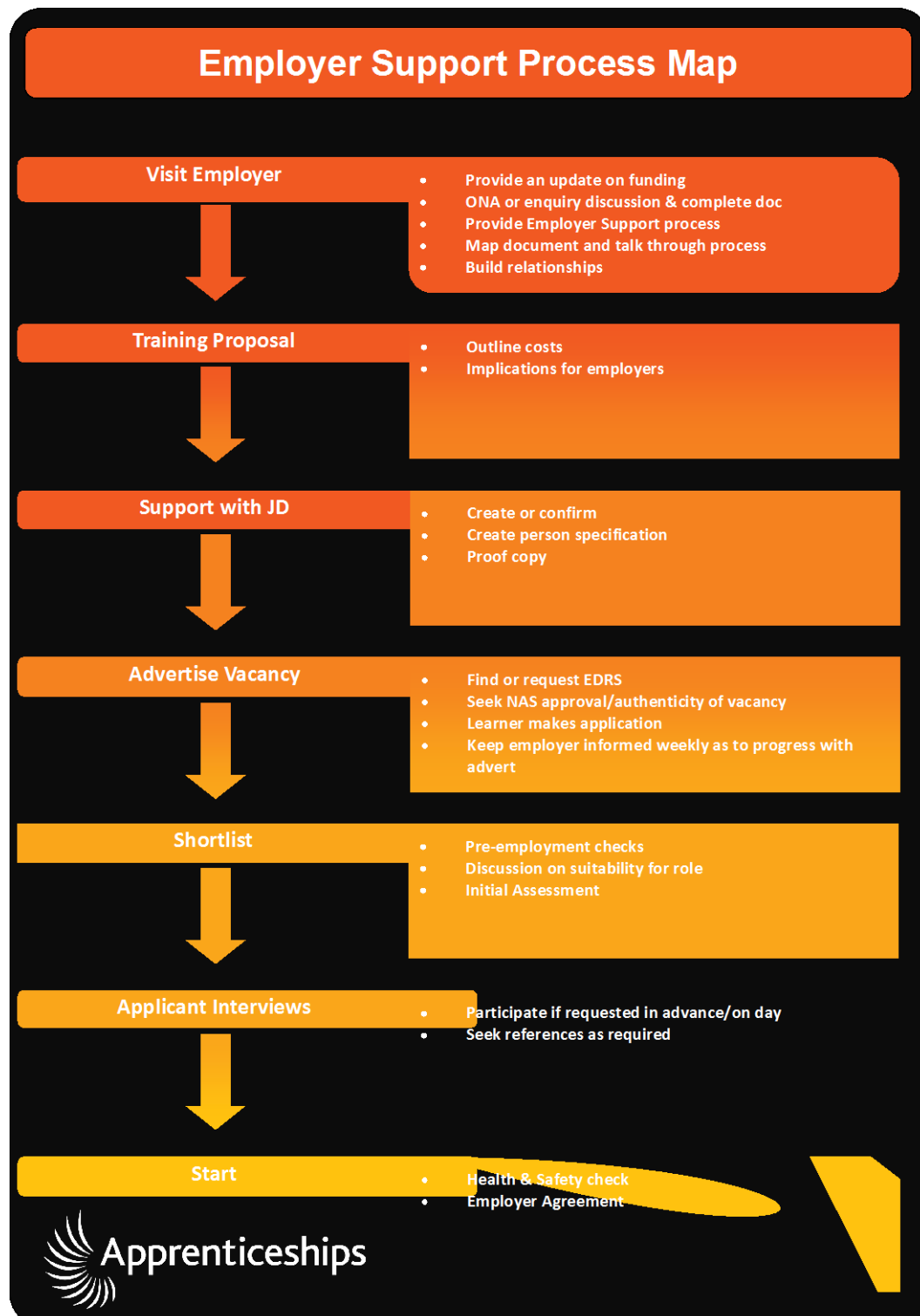
- Research the company to be visited (section 4.1)
- Ensure you are fully aware of what your organisation can offer (section 4.2)
- Discuss this with whoever is observing you on the visit
- Lead the client meeting and record discussions according to your own organisation's systems/documentation

5. Feedback meeting

- When you return to your organisation, discuss your notes with your observer
- Check these against what they have recorded/feel is important
- Write up a final visit report or ONA (organisational needs analysis)

4. The employer support process

This is the internal process for supporting employers through the minefield of Apprenticeships.



5. A handout for employers: your step by step guide to easy Apprenticeship recruitment

Your step by step guide to easy apprenticeship recruitment

Understand your business

We will visit you to understand your business and establish your needs

Support your business

Professional advice to support recruitment of your apprentice. This will include helping you to create a:

- ▶ Job description
- ▶ Person specification

Advertise your vacancy

We offer you a free service that will:

- ▶ Use the National Apprenticeship Service to advertise your vacancy in your catchment area
- ▶ Advertise on our website



Manage your vacancy

- ▶ Review applications
- ▶ Shortlist applicants
- ▶ Check eligibility to be an apprentice

Arrange interviews with candidates

- ▶ Inform shortlisted applicants of interview date/time/place
- ▶ Confirm applicant attendance
- ▶ Provide you with a confirmed attendee list
- ▶ Join your interview panel, if requested



Support your new apprentice recruit

- ▶ Complete apprenticeship enrolment paperwork for you
- ▶ Give you a named contact to support you and your apprentice throughout the programme

6. Jargon Buster

Evidence has been seen of using all of these terms with clients. Clearly jargon and especially initials should be avoided, but ask yourself “why do I need to say this?” and “what does it add to the understanding?” If it does not add value, clearly, don’t say it. Learn from the client; use their language, not yours.

QCF Qualification Credit Framework

AoC Associate of Colleges

SFA Skills Funding Agency

NAS National Apprenticeship Service

LSIS Learning and Skills Improvement Service

SSC Sector Skills Council

FE Further Education

LMI Labour Market Intelligence

ILR Individual Learner Record

ILP Individual Learning Plan

WBL Work Based Learning

AVMS Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service

C&G City & Guilds

EDI Education Development International

ILM Institute of Leadership and Management

SMEs Small and Medium Enterprises

AAT Association of Accounting Technicians

IIP Investors in People

AON Application of Number

COM Communication

ICT Information Communication Technology

Lastly, “**framework**” means nothing outside a training provider, avoid totally!

Applying for an Apprenticeship by CV

Your CV is your most important job-search tool and is often the first opportunity that you get to make a good impression on a potential employer.

It is important to realise that applying for an apprenticeship is just like applying for any other job and so a good CV will considerably improve your chances of getting an interview. The importance of having a good quality CV means that it is well worth investing time and effort on the content and presentation of your CV. Read on for advice and guidance on creating an effective CV.

What is a CV?

A Curriculum Vitae is a paper document usually prepared for job applications, containing an outline of your qualifications, work experience, educational history and skills.

When should you use a CV?

- When an employer asks you to apply for a job by CV or “in writing.”
- When an employer does not specify the format of application.
- When sending ‘speculative applications’ (writing to an employer who isn’t advertising a vacancy but who you hope may have one now or in the future).



Content of a CV

Your CV should include:

- **Personal Details:** Your name, address and contact details.
- **Education and qualifications:** The names of schools/colleges/universities you have attended and the dates that you attended them, plus any qualifications that you gained at them e.g. GCSEs, A Levels.
- **Work Experience:** Details of where you are working/ have worked previously and the dates in which you worked there along with short descriptions of your role. It is important to include all work experience as even work in a shop or restaurant involves gaining valuable skills such as

teamwork and dealing with customers. Depending on how much work experience you have you can slightly tailor your CV depending on the job you are applying for by highlighting the most relevant work experience/skills.

- **Skills and qualities:** Examples of relevant technical skills to be contained in a CV include: Computing (e.g. word processing, spreadsheets-excel), a full clean driving license, any languages you can speak. Examples of relevant personal skills to put in your CV include: effective communication skills, organisational skills (timekeeping), team-working, problem solving skills etc. It is a good idea to try to back any personal skills up with examples.
- **Leisure interests/activities/achievements:** These are important in demonstrating other skills you have acquired (particularly if you have a limited amount of work experience which may be the case if you are just leaving school), they also give the employer an idea of what type of person you are based on what you like to do in your spare time. Examples of good interests to include in a CV are: Any interests relevant to the job you are applying for, evidence of responsibility or leadership (e.g. school prefect/captain of a sports team), any hobbies that involve interacting with others, any different hobbies that can make it easier for you to stand out from the crowd (e.g. scuba diving).



• **Referees:** It is normal to include the names and addresses of two referees at the bottom of your CV (it is polite to agree with them first). Ideally you should have one referee from your academic background (e.g. a school teacher) and one from a previous employer (e.g. someone from your work experience/part-time job.)

Presentation of a CV

Presentation can be just as important as content when creating your CV and although there is no set format for a CV some general rules should be followed:

- Try to stick to one to two sides of A4 paper by being selective of the most relevant information and focusing on key facts.
- Use good quality paper.
- Be positive by putting high grades first and highlighting your strengths-remember that you are trying to sell yourself to an employer!
- Double check all of your spelling, punctuation and grammar for mistakes.

- Be concise and clear- separate sections of your CV with headings and try to use a mixture of text and bullet points to focus on key points.
- Don't handwrite your CV, word process it and use a clear, easy readable font.
- Make sure that your CV is up to date, honest and accurate.

Applying for an Apprenticeship: job application

Your employer may request that you submit a job application form rather than a CV or as well as a CV.

A job application is just as important as a CV when applying for a job and contains the same general information, the only difference being that you are in control of the content and design of your CV whereas an application has been designed by someone else!

Read on for some useful tips on filling out an application form effectively:

- Write neatly and clearly using blue or black ink if it is a written application form. Make sure that you follow any instructions on the application form carefully, e.g. if it says to print in black ink then make sure you do or your application could end up straight in the bin!
- Don't leave any blank spaces- fill out all of the information requested. If you're not quite sure on how to answer a question then take the application home with you and ask someone for advice. If a question doesn't apply to you at all then make sure you put 'N/A' in the box.
- Read questions properly before answering them.
- Double check your spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Make sure all information is accurate and provide examples to back up your statements.
- List your most recent job and education first when completing employment/education information.
- Be positive and use positive language in your application.

Application form/CV- questions to ask yourself:

- Is it clear and easy to read?
- Are the spelling, punctuation and grammar all correct?
- Is it positive and confident sounding?
- Is all the information accurate?
- Are my abilities and strengths highlighted?
- Does my CV/application form make me sound suited to the job I'm applying for?
- Have I accounted for all time periods in my education/work history?
- Is all the information relevant and interesting.

