

# Apprenticeships advice and guidance



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# Contents

	Page
Purpose of this guide .....	2
An introduction to apprenticeships.....	3
Understanding the qualifications.....	4
Entry requirements explained .....	5
What will I earn? Apprenticeships and benefits .....	6
Why do an apprenticeship and myths debunked! .....	7
Frameworks, standards and EPAs.....	8
Off-the-job training explained .....	9
How do you get an apprenticeship .....	10
Recommended apprentice application timeline .....	11, 12
Recommended application year timeline.....	13
The current labour market within Swale .....	14
Frequently Asked Questions .....	15
Where can I find more support? .....	16

## Purpose of this guide

- ➔ To support and help parents, carers, students and employers to access apprenticeships
- ➔ To enable a greater understanding about what an apprenticeship is
- ➔ Time lines to help you prepare and apply, with tips and hints
- ➔ How to apply and answers to your questions

# An introduction to apprenticeships

An apprenticeship has always been described by a very simple phrase 'Earn While You Learn', but an apprenticeship is much more than just learning and earning money. There are currently over 520 apprenticeships available and in development for the future\*. These can be undertaken in 1,500 different job roles.

In an apprenticeship you are employed from the day you start and attached to either a Further Education College (FE), Independent Training Provider (ITP), or a university. Your learning hours and/or off-the-job training hours over the duration of your apprenticeship will make up around 20% of your time. The remaining 80% consists of working with experienced staff and gaining job-specific skills. Your learning hours could consist of one day a week at college/ with a training provider, or block release at university/ with a training provider, or mentor visits at your workplace.

Apprenticeships are available for everyone over the age of 16, who have completed Key Stage 4 (KS4) (usually the end of year 11 at school). As apprenticeships do not follow an academic year rotation, you can apply for and start one at any time in the year. However, some

training providers, such as colleges, still open their application timelines and set their main apprenticeships with a September start to support school leavers, but that it is up to the training provider's discretion.

Within your apprenticeship you are entitled to a minimum of 20 days holiday per year, including bank holidays. The minimum working hours for an apprenticeship are 30 hours per week, including your off-the-job training, either Monday-Friday 9-5 or shift work within certain sectors.

Throughout your apprenticeship you will receive continuous mentor support; this will include regular meetings to set goals, sign off assignments and offer you support throughout your apprenticeship. The main role of a mentor is to be a sounding board for your challenges, concerns and ideas, and to support your progression.

The duration of your apprenticeship can depend on employer, type of apprenticeship, and industry. An apprenticeship can take 1-4 years to complete but some apprenticeships, such as the Solicitor apprenticeship, can take up to 6 years.

***Apprenticeships are not an easy option; they require hard work and hard study, but the rewards makes it a worthwhile challenge.***

\*Source Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education

# Understanding the qualifications

The table below explains which nationally recognised qualification is equivalent to each level of apprenticeship.

Name	Level	Qualification Equivalent
Intermediate	Level 2	GCSE Equivalent to five GCSE passes at 5/C grade or above
Advanced	Level 3	A level Equivalent to two A level passes
Higher	Level 4, 5 and 6	Foundation Degree and above Level 4 completed: Equivalent to HNC or Foundation Degree. Level 5 and 6: Equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree.
Degree	Level 6 and 7	Bachelors or Master's Degree Level 6: Equivalent to a Bachelor's Degree Level 7: Equivalent to a Master's Degree.

*To be able to complete an apprenticeship, you must not have an equal level of qualification from previous education.*

*All qualifications you receive are viewed as equivalent to any qualifications gained in school, college or university.*

*Due to recent changes to English and Maths requirements, people with an EHCP (Education Health Care Plan) or learning difficulties can complete an intermediate apprenticeship, as long as they achieve an Entry Level 3 in functional skills qualification during this apprenticeship.*



# Entry requirements explained

Apprenticeships are available to anyone over the age of 16, in England who has completed their KS4 full-time education, usually by the end of year 11. However, some sectors will require an apprentice to be over 18 when they start, due to health and safety concerns.

Entry requirements can vary depending on industry sector, starting level and the employer's preference. The list below compares the official entry requirements, to the entry requirements commonly asked for in apprenticeship advertisements last year.



*Employers decide who they offer an apprenticeship to, so someone who demonstrates a passion to work and learn, industry experience and potential to complete the qualification, may well be their preferred candidate.*

## **Intermediate level:**

**Entry requirement:** Aged 16 and above, Year 11 completed, three or more GCSE's above a pass (C or grade 5)

**Often accepted:** Previous experience in the sector, alongside qualifications.

## **Advanced level:**

**Entry requirement:** Aged 16 and above, Year 11 completed, three or more GCSE's above a pass (C or grade 5).

**Often accepted:** Previous experience, alongside qualifications.

## **Higher level:**

**Entry requirement:** Five GCSE's 5/C and above and two Level 3 qualifications, preferably industry related.

**Often accepted:** Five GCSE's C and above and two Level 3 qualifications, and relevant work experience.

## **Degree level:**

**Entry requirement:** Five GCSE's C and above, and two Level 3 qualifications (A level/ Btec) preferably industry related.

**Often accepted:** Five GCSE's C and above and a minimum of two Level 3 qualifications and relevant work experience.

**All entry requirements are indicated on apprenticeship vacancies.**

# What will I earn?



The National Minimum Wage (NMW) for apprentices is currently £3.70 (as of April 2018) but it will rise to £3.90 in April 2019. The apprenticeship NMW is only applicable to apprentices aged 19 or under; for those aged 19 or over NMW only applies for the first year of their apprenticeship.

If apprentices are aged 25 or over they will be entitled to the standard National Minimum Wage.

Below are the current rates for the National Living Wage and the National Minimum Wage, although the rates change every April.

Year	25 and over	21 to 24	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice
April 2018 (current rate)	£7.83	£7.38	£5.90	£4.20	£3.70
April 2019	£8.21	£7.70	£6.15	£4.35	£3.90

Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice rate if they're either:

- aged under 19
- aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship

**Example:** An apprentice aged 22 in the first year of their apprenticeship is entitled to a minimum hourly rate of £3.70.

Apprentices are entitled to the minimum wage for their age if they **both**:

- are aged 19 or over
- have completed the first year of their apprenticeship

**Example:** An apprentice aged 22 who has completed the first year of their apprenticeship is entitled to a minimum hourly rate of £7.38.

Many apprentices receive more than the minimum wage, but this depends on the company you work for, your experience and the industry sector, as the salary is chosen by the employer. The Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2016, estimated the average gross hourly pay received by apprentices in Great Britain was £6.70 an hour for Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices.

When considering what you may earn it is always key to remember that the experience and qualifications you gain during your time as an apprentice are a massive bonus on top which is hard to put a price on.

# Apprenticeships and benefits

Individuals in receipt of benefits worry that an apprenticeship will adversely affect their income. Apprenticeships and benefits need to be dealt with on a personal basis, so if you are considering an apprenticeship we recommend contacting your local Job Centre Plus for further advice and guidance. Alternatively you can visit one of the websites detailed below for more support.

- **JCP** - [www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-your-earnings-affect-your-payments](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/how-your-earnings-affect-your-payments)
- **Turn2Us** - <https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk/AboutYou>
- **CAB** - [www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income)
- **Entitledto** - [www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk)
- **Policy in Practice** - [www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/#/free](http://www.betteroffcalculator.co.uk/#/free)

## Apprenticeship myths debunked

It's all just making tea and coffee, photocopying, and donkey work!

**Not True!** You will be working a real job with a real employer, alongside experienced members of staff who will share their knowledge, skills and industry insight with you from day one. It is in the company's interest to train you to a skilled level quickly, because they want you to do a good job for them; you will be expected to complete units of work and study on every area of the company from the bottom to the top, so you won't have time to make the tea!



Apprenticeships are just for hairdressing or bricklaying.

**Not True!** There are so many options within apprenticeships - did you know you can be an apprentice in Funeral Operative, Law, Zoology, Aerospace Engineering, and more! There are over 1,500 different job roles you can undertake as an apprentice.

Apprenticeships are only for people who did badly at school.

**Not True!** This is one of the biggest misconceptions about apprenticeships. Apprenticeships may be open to anyone, whatever qualifications they have, but the higher and degree level apprenticeships require the same level of achievement as a university degree and getting a place

on one can be more competitive. Don't forget, with a degree apprenticeship you won't need a student loan - your training will be paid for by your employer, meaning you will have obtained a degree without £45,000 of debt! Which is why employers can demand the best candidates.

You'll be stuck with the same company after you finish your apprenticeship, like it or not.

**Not True!** Although 72% of apprentices stay with their employer after their apprenticeship because they want to, the knowledge and skills they gain from an apprenticeship strengthen their CVs, enabling them to take up other opportunities within their industries. Research strongly suggests employers are keen to take on apprentices because their industry experience means they are more adaptable and able to gain promotion faster.

Apprenticeships are only for school leavers!

**Not True!** Apprenticeships are not limited by a maximum age; you can undertake an apprenticeship at any stage of your life.

You earn less after your apprenticeship than university Graduates!

**Not True!** Firstly, you will not have any student loan debt which makes you over £27,000 up! You will be gaining transferrable experience and skills within the workplace enabling you to progress within most companies quickly.

## What are frameworks, standards and EPAs?

Frameworks were developed by colleges and FE institutions, and were set out to define a pathway through an apprenticeship. There are around 230 apprenticeship frameworks, most focused on achieving a qualification such as an NVQ or Btec. Each apprenticeship framework generally includes the following elements:

- A knowledge-based qualification
- A competence-based qualification
- Functional skills in English, maths and sometimes ICT
- Employee rights and responsibilities
- Personal learning and thinking skills



However, frameworks haven't always delivered the best experience for apprentices, as the study modules don't always match the skills the employer requires. There's no end-point assessment in a framework, which means there's no final check to see that the apprentice has gained the most relevant skills for their role. To address this issue, the Institute for Apprenticeships began working with employers to develop new apprenticeship standards, aiming to replace apprenticeship frameworks by 2020.

**Standards better meet the needs of employers.** A standard is a concise document detailing the knowledge, skills and behaviours for each occupation. Standards are proposed, designed and delivered by employers, to equip apprentices with the relevant knowledge and skills. Apprentices are assessed at the end of their training period to prove they can carry out all aspects of their job. The skills they develop during their apprenticeship are workplace focused and highly transferable, meaning both the apprentice and future employer benefit. Employers are in the best position to determine when a new apprenticeship standard is required, as they understand where skill gaps lie and what training will make the most sense for their industry.

**EPA or End Point Assessment**, is the final assessment at the end of a standard. The purpose of the EPA is to test that an apprentice is fully capable of doing their job before they receive their apprenticeship certificate. It also helps to demonstrate that what an apprentice has learned can be applied in the real world.

Apprenticeship Standards are still being written and released. If your chosen future career is not currently available as an apprenticeship, keep an eye on the Institute for Apprenticeships website – [www.instituteforapprenticeships.org](http://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org) – which advertises all apprenticeships under development and those soon to be released.

## Off-the-job training explained

Employers are required to provide 20% off-the-job training, which can be defined in a few different ways. All apprentices are required to learn in a 'non-normal day' setting, this can be held in the



workplace but needs to be separate from their normal working day. Although the off the job training needs to be 'out of the norm', it still needs to directly enhance the apprenticeship. It could include role playing, simulation, online learning, shadowing, learning support, assignment work and industry visits.

Although it is possible to gain your English and Maths during your apprenticeship, qualifications up to a Level 2 do not count as off-the-job training. This is the same for progress reviews or training out of paid hours.

# 10 steps on how to find an apprenticeship in 2019

School leavers often want to get out into the world of work, and an apprenticeship is an ideal way to help them do this – but they may well need support and guidance to find one; so what can parents and carers do to help them?

**STEP 1. THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE** Sit down with your child and think about the future - what are their interests and career goals, where do they see themselves in the future? Do they want a desk job, or something more hands on and practical? What is most important to them, what do they care about?

**STEP 2. REGISTER** Register on Find An Apprenticeship to browse all the latest vacancy opportunities. At any one time there are more than 20,000 vacancies across England, so it is the perfect place to start an apprenticeship search: [www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship) and [www.apprenticekent.com/home](http://www.apprenticekent.com/home)

**STEP 3. SET UP ALERTS** When you set up an account, you can also set up email or text messages alerts for when relevant apprenticeship vacancies are added to the site.

**STEP 4. EVENTS** There are lots of events throughout the year where you can meet employers and apprentices, pick up information leaflets and attend workshops with apprenticeship experts to discuss the range of apprenticeship options.

**STEP 5. CONTACT SCHOOL OR COLLEGE** Enquire at your child's school or college, to see what careers events they are putting on. Ask if they are bringing in any expert speakers and what opportunities for parents to attend there might be.

**STEP 6. CREATE YOUR OWN CALENDAR** Allocate time to search for the right opportunity for your child. Set aside time for application/interview prep, as well as time to visit employers and careers days. This will help your child stay on top of their application and set them on the path for success!

**STEP 7. LOOK FOR WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES** This is a great way to gain valuable experience at weekends or in the school holidays. This is especially useful if your child is unsure of what career route/job role they may want in the future, as well as being a great opportunity to enrich their CV.

**STEP 8. DO EXTRA RESEARCH** The Amazing Apprenticeships portal has been designed to help you find out about apprenticeships. Spend time on Vacancy Snapshot to understand the recruitment processes of some of the biggest employers in the world: [www.amazingapprenticeships.com/vacancies](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com/vacancies)

**STEP 9. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY CONNECTED** Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are all brilliant ways to keep connected to apprenticeship news. Follow [@Apprenticeships](https://twitter.com/Apprenticeships) and [@AmazingAppsUK](https://twitter.com/AmazingAppsUK) to keep up to date.

**STEP 10. LOOK OUT FOR NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK** The 4th - 8th March is a week dedicated to all things apprenticeships! Engage with inspiring activities for both you and your child, happening in schools and communities across the country.

# Recommended apprenticeship application timeline

Intermediate and Advanced: When looking into apprenticeship options, we recommend finding out about and applying for as many suitable options as possible, as this will allow the students to make a well-informed choice. Below is a suggested plan for students, guardians and teachers to follow and adapt to fit a student's path.

## Aged 14 – 15

**Research:** We recommend that research and information is provided to students within the Key Stage 3 curriculum. Students should be researching all areas of apprenticeships, building a basic understanding of apprenticeships with their specific areas of interest.

**Work experience:** Students should be looking to find work experience opportunities in their preferred industry. If the students are unsure of their interest in career options, then this is an opportunity to gain experience of as many different careers as possible. Schools should support them with this, but may well insist these placements happen during the holidays, so as not to impact on school work.

**Communicating with employers and training providers:** Students should start conversations with local training providers and employers in their preferred industries, they will be able to offer advice and guidance about the most common routes into employment.

## Aged 15 – 16

**Application preparation, CV creating and cover letter writing:** Students should be supported in creating their CVs and covering letters, both in school and at home. They should also be looking at how to complete application forms, using good written English to talk about their key skills and achievements.

**Work experience:** Hopefully earlier work experience will have helped students get a clearer idea of where they want to work in the future, and they can look for industry specific work experience where possible. However, all work experience has value, as it demonstrates both maturity and a number of transferable skills, such as reasonability, professional attitude and time management.

**Communicating with employers and training providers:** Students should continue conversations with local training providers and employers in their preferred industries, to begin building a professional network.

**Interview preparation:** Students should be given support in preparing for interviews, such as practicing how to answer questions correctly and confidently.

## Aged 16 – 18

**Research:** Students interested in degree level apprenticeships should be researching opportunities and looking to gain a basic understanding of apprenticeships in their preferred industry.

**Application preparation, CV creating and cover letter writing:** Students should have a strong understanding of the sectors they are applying to now and should be sending their applications to employers.

Students should be supported in creating their CVs and covering letters. They should also research how to complete application forms competently, displaying good written English and confident answers.

**Communicating with employers, training providers and universities:** Students should be interacting with local training providers, universities and employers in their chosen industry sector. They will be able to offer advice and guidance about the most common routes into their chosen employment path.

**Interviews:** Students should be attending interviews with their local training providers, universities and employers in the hope of securing their future placements.



**Part-time work:** Students should be looking for part time work, ideally with some relevance for their future careers. Training providers, universities and employers can advise on this.

**Work experience:** Now they are older, students may well find more opportunities open up for them in their chosen industry sectors. Things such as work shadowing, mentoring schemes and one off visits are all part of this, and offer valuable insights into potential future careers.

# Recommended application year timeline

Following on from the recommended apprenticeship application timeline, KATO has devised a guide to what students should be focussing on throughout the academic year.

## September \*Possible applications open for September start\*

- ✓ Research
- ✓ CV and cover letter preparation
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## October \*Possible applications open for September start\*

- ✓ Research
- ✓ CV and cover letter preparation
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation
- ✓ Sourcing work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## November \*Possible applications open for September start\*

- ✓ Research
- ✓ CV and cover letter completion
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation
- ✓ Sourcing/starting work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## December

- ✓ Research
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation
- ✓ Sourcing/starting work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## January

- ✓ Research
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application process
- ✓ Starting work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## February

- ✓ Research
- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation completed
- ✓ Work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## March (Exam Prep Month)

- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation completed
- ✓ Work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## April (Exam Prep Month)

- ✓ Communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Application preparation completed
- ✓ Work experience
- ✓ Part-time work if applicable

## May (Exam Month)

## June (Exam Month)

## July

- ✓ Final communication with employers/training providers/colleges/universities
- ✓ Applications sent
- ✓ Work experience completed
- ✓ Part time work if applicable

# The current labour market within Swale

The Swale economy has experienced high levels of growth, with around 5,000 new jobs created between 2012 and 2017.

The top growth sectors have been:

- manufacturing
- retail
- transport and storage
- accommodation and food services

Over this five year period the transport and storage, accommodation and food service sectors have seen the highest increases in employment (1000 each). Construction is also a significant sector in Swale and has seen the highest number of new jobs created in the last three years, after a period of stability in the aftermath of the credit crunch.

Manufacturing is very prevalent in Swale and includes the likes of advanced engineering, chemicals and plastics, and food and drink. Swale has a long history of paper manufacturing, growth in the paper and wood sector accounts for a 13% increase during this period.

Geographically, 57% of all the Borough's employment is located in the Sittingbourne area and this has been the focus for employment growth over the past decade.

Major industrial employment sites have been developed at Kemsley Fields and the Eurolink, It is anticipated that this will continue over the next few years as these sites continue to expand.

The scale of employment growth for which the Borough is currently planning up to 2031, is set out in the Council's adopted Local Plan (2017). The plan makes provision for a further 60 hectares of employment land which, has the potential to create an additional 10,900 jobs.

On the Isle of Sheppey there is a continued programme of investment planned at Sheerness Port and at Neatscourt Retail Park which are both expected to contribute to overall employment growth in Swale.

However, it is the manufacturing and transport and distribution sectors that are anticipated to continue to drive growth the most, due to the sites that have been allocated and market sentiment, but also because Swale has benefited from the retention and expansion of businesses already located in the Borough.

It is also anticipated that there will continue to be growth in the hospitality sector, as the visitor economy (tourism, leisure and hospitality sector) continues to grow within the Borough and with the introduction of the new cinema and restaurant investment in Sittingbourne Town Centre.

With the significant need for increased housing for the future, employment in construction is will continue to grow too. Similarly digital and technical skills are becoming more prevalent in the workplace generally.

# Frequently asked questions about apprenticeships

## Do I have to finish Year 11?

Yes, you have to complete your full KS4 education.

## When can I start an apprenticeship after leaving school?

The date varies each year, but is usually on or around 30 June

## Is getting an apprenticeship difficult?

Applying for apprenticeships can be challenging but hopefully our assessment breakdown in this pack should offer you a working guide on how to do it.

## Is it every day?

An apprenticeship is most commonly Monday – Friday, but this does depend on the type of apprenticeship, as some sectors may expect you to work shifts and weekends.

## Am I too old for an apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are only restricted by a minimum age, there is no maximum.

## How long does an apprenticeship take?

The length of your apprenticeship can depend on the level, sector and your ability to learn throughout your employment. It is likely to be for a minimum of 18 months.

## How much will I get paid?

The national minimum wage for an apprentice is £3.70 but an employer can choose the salary paid. The national average for an apprenticeship wage is £6.70

## Do I have to take tests?

Yes, you will complete an EPA. This is explained in more detail on page 9. Do not fear, you will have learnt everything you need to know during your apprenticeship.

## Will I have to pay anything to be an apprentice?

Apprentices do not have to pay any money towards their apprenticeship. You will, however, have to pay travel costs.

## What are the benefits of an apprenticeship?

The main benefits are the experience you gain throughout your apprenticeship, the progression route it offers into long term employment, and the greater level of industry specific skills and qualifications you will achieve.

## Do employers like apprenticeships?

Yes - employers' views on apprenticeships are more positive year after year, as they recognise the huge benefit of the practical training and high level work experience you receive.

## Who pays for my apprenticeship?

Apprenticeship costs are covered by government funding and the employer. The costs are paid through agreements between the training provider and employer, dependent on the size of the employer.

## Will an apprenticeship lead to a real job?

90% of apprentices stay in employment at the end of their apprenticeship, either with the same employer or a different one.

## Can I do an apprenticeship if I have a degree?

Yes, if you have not already gained the same qualification. You will only receive funding if you are training for a different qualification.

## Do I get holidays?

Yes, although an apprenticeship doesn't work on an academic year rotation you are entitled to 20 days paid holiday per year – including bank holidays.

## Is my apprenticeship worth UCAS points?

Yes, if you complete your apprenticeship you are able to collect UCAS points. You are able to see what they are worth on the UCAS Tariff Table.

## Will apprenticeships impact on my family benefits?

The impact of an apprenticeship on benefits claimants will need to be assessed on a case by case basis, so please contact your local DWP office for further advice and support. Please refer to page 9 for more detail.

# Where can I find more support?

➔ **Find an Apprenticeship**

[www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship)

➔ **National Apprenticeship Service**

[www.apprenticeships.gov.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

Call 08000 150 600

➔ **Apprentice Kent**

[www.apprenticekent.com](http://www.apprenticekent.com)

Call 03000 414005

Email: [apprenticekent@theeducationpeople.org](mailto:apprenticekent@theeducationpeople.org)

➔ **KATO**

[www.kato-training.org/](http://www.kato-training.org/)

Call 01795 432606

Email: [info@kato-training.com](mailto:info@kato-training.com)

➔ **Swale Means Business**

[www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk](http://www.swalemeansbusiness.co.uk)

Call 01795 41739

Email: [edu@swale.gov.uk](mailto:edu@swale.gov.uk)

➔ **UCAS**

[www.ucas.com/apprenticeships-in-the-uk](http://www.ucas.com/apprenticeships-in-the-uk)

➔ **Amazing Apprenticeships**

[www.amazingapprenticeships.com](http://www.amazingapprenticeships.com)

➔ **The Apprenticeship Guide**

[www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk](http://www.apprenticeshipguide.co.uk)