

Apprenticeships Webinar Transcript

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[Text: Webinar Apprenticeships]

[Emma] So welcome to the webinar apprenticeship session. We're here today to cover what is an apprenticeship, levels of an apprenticeship, the benefits of an apprenticeship, expectations, where you might find an apprenticeship and then also how to stand out above other candidates for apprenticeships as well.

So, we're not here to talk about specific apprenticeships but we're here to kind of give you an overview on what apprenticeships are and then what you need to do to get an apprenticeship really.

[Text: What is an apprenticeship? Paid job and recognised qualification. Learn whilst you earn. Available from 16+, Open to career changers. Labour marketing information shows: 13.4% jobs in Wholesale and Retail Trade, Education. Human health and Social Work activities. 12.8% jobs in manufacturing. 8.6% Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security.]

[Emma] Yeah, so what is an apprenticeship? So, it's a paid job and recognised qualification so you might hear the term earn while you learn. It's available from anyone up to, sorry from 16 plus, open to career changes as well.

A little bit of labour market information and sort of research that we did shows that in general in terms of the world of work, 13.4 jobs in wholesale and retail trade in County Durham. Education, human health and social work activities followed by 12.8% jobs are in manufacturing and 8.6% are in public administration and defence and compulsory social security work.

[Text: Apprenticeship Levels. Level 2 GCSE Equivalent, Level 3 A Level Equivalent, Levels 4-5 Higher, Level 6-7 Degree.]

[Lucy] So, apprenticeships start kind of level two and that's the GCSE equivalent. So usually when you finish school you've either achieved a level two, or an apprenticeship level can start at a level two depending on what your GCSEs look like. There's level three apprenticeships as well which as it says their A-level equivalent so you can kind of look to go down an A-level route, T-level route, anything like that but apprenticeship levels are around that kind of level that you're looking for. Level four to five is a higher, level six to seven is a degree so apprenticeships kind of start from the level two and then work their way up.

Depending on how long your apprenticeship lasts for will depend on what level you're also doing as well.

[Text: Earn a wage. Gain experience. No tuition fees. Progress into careers.]

[Presenter 1] Yep, so it's important to talk about the benefits of apprenticeships so obviously the main one is that you will be earning a wage, and Lucy will kind of go into a little bit about what that looks like a little bit later on. It helps you gain vital experience so going into work, working with sort of other people, it's a really good experience to have with the bonus that there are no tuition fees attached like there would be if you were to go to university and there's a lot of progression routes with apprenticeships as well and you can go and do lots of different, there's all sorts of different areas that you can kind of progress into.

A new area that's kind of emerging at the moment is AI, artificial intelligence apprenticeships have just been developed so lots of things happening at the moment in the world of apprenticeships.

[Text: Employer Expectations. Reliability and attendance. Professional Manner. Willingness to Learn. Meet deadlines.]

[Lucy] Employer expectations, so there is expectations from any employer regardless of whether there's an apprenticeship or not. These are some of the main things that an employer would expect you to be so that's reliability and attendance, professional behaviour, willingness to learn and meet deadlines.

Some other things would include kind of like motivation, make sure that you're kind of willing and ready to work. Those expectations from an employer are different depending on the employer. Some expect you to wear certain safety gear such as steel toe cap boots, some expect you to have a certain knowledge on a certain area and when you go on for things like interviews which we'll go into a little bit later, some will expect you to know a little bit about the employer and what the employer would like from yourselves as well.

[Text: Complete training. 20% off the job training. Keep evidence/portfolio. Communicate with tutors.]

[Emma] So, in terms of what you'll actually be doing once you're on an apprenticeship, you will be expected to complete training. Obviously, the idea is that you're earning once you're learning and this forms 20% off the job learning. So, what that can look like is it could either be in-house so you just do your 20% off the job in the employer workplace or you might have to go to sort of perhaps a local college or training provider on certain days of the week to kind of complete that learning.

This will then help you to sort of build up a portfolio of evidence which will then be put towards like your final sort of apprenticeship assessment to ensure that you've met the standards and you'll also be expected to communicate on a regular basis with the tutors running the apprenticeship programme to ensure that you are sort of on track. So generally, you should have regular reviews with a tutor to make sure that you're keeping up with the learning side of things as well.

[Text: Pay and Rights. Paid employee status. Holiday entitlement. Training time paid. National minimum apprentice wage applies. Apprentice minimum wage is £8.00 per hour. This rate applies if you are: Under 19 years old, regardless of how long you have been an

apprentice. 19 or over in the first year of your apprenticeship. If you are 19 or older and have completed the first year of your apprenticeship you must receive the minimum wage rate for your age: Age 19-20 £10.85 per hour. Age 21+ £12.71 per hour.]

[Lucy] So paying rights, so any employer do have the right to pay apprentices. They get a paid employment status, you get holiday entitlement, there's training time period time, paid as well and then obviously national minimum apprentice wage applies. So those three things, these four things you would get as an apprentice, it's legal so you know in your own rights to get that. We've just put on there a few different things about your actual wage and what it is at the moment.

These were from April 2026; it changes potentially year on year depending on what the national minimum wage is. Sometimes employers decide to pay a bit more, but these rates are the kind of basic rates. So, an apprentice minimum wage rate is £8 an hour if you're under 19 years old or you're 19 and over and in your first year of your apprenticeship. So that's standard across the board.

If you're 19 and older and have completed your first year of your apprenticeship, if you're between 19 and 20 it's £10.85 per hour and if it's aged 21 plus it's £12.71 per hour.

[Text: Gov.uk Find an Apprenticeship. National Apprenticeship Service, UKApprenticejobs.co.uk. Company websites. Recruitment sites. DurhamWorks support. Calling/emailing/visiting companies directly. Friend of a friend.]

[Emma] So just moving on a little bit now in terms of where to actually find apprenticeships, there is the Government's Find an Apprenticeship service and you can go on there and I would recommend that if you are interested in sort of looking at apprenticeships, set up an account because what you can do, is they've got a really good sort of search facility so you just pop in, you can even just pop in like what area you live in and it will list all the apprenticeships starting with the ones that are closest first to you in terms of a distance wise and then obviously you can sort of widen your search, and you can also specify particular areas. However, if you are too specific it might not come up with anything and that just means that there isn't any apprenticeships in that particular area.

We've also sort of recently, so obviously there's a ukapprenticejobs.co.uk and again this is kind of sort of follows on from the National Apprenticeship website and it kind of just quite clearly lists all in one go what apprenticeships are actually available sort of in Durham. You can really sort of drill down that information, and it'll bring them all up.

The other place to look can be company websites. If you were looking specifically for a Durham County Council vacancy, all apprenticeships and other vacancies are advertised on North East Jobs. So, it's really important to sort of get yourself familiar with those websites and also registered because it can take a bit of time to get the registration on. There are also sort of specific recruitment sites and DurhamWorks can also help when you're looking for an apprenticeship. So, if you were interested in getting some more support, we've got some more information later on in the slides about how to access that.

Something that a lot of people miss, so a lot of people will use the National Apprenticeship website and use that to apply. However, there's nothing stopping you from going in and sort of going to the company direct that you're interested in working for and just asking what opportunities they have available. Even if they don't have anything available at the time, it's really good if you kind of ring them or even just go down in person because it really helps them to remember because apprenticeships are so, so popular.

You just need to be doing things to give yourself that competitive advantage when it comes to looking for apprenticeships. Also ask a friend of a friend, you know there might be someone down the road that's got their own business that you want to work for. Just go and ask them if they've got any sort of work, if you consider taking on an apprentice and local colleges and training providers can help employers if they're looking to set up an apprenticeship for the first time as well.

Really important to stress when you do go on to the Apprenticeship Service website that when you're filling in the application form, it is an application form so it isn't just an enquiry form, they use it to assess whether or not they're going to give you an interview so it's important to spend some time doing that as well.

[Text: Employers with high numbers of apprenticeships. Durham County Council (122 apprenticeships currently). NHS organisations (100 apprenticeships in County Durham. Engineering and manufacturing (60/70 active live apprenticeships). Construction. Business support – such as admin.]

[Lucy] These are employers here on the screen that have a high number of apprenticeships within County Durham. Obviously with us being Durham based we've kind of focused on the Durham area.

Durham County Council are present and they have 122 apprentices. Emma's just said before Durham County Council advertise their apprenticeships around kind of like March-April time, is that right Emma? March-April time, so if you're on the lookout for a Durham County Council apprenticeship that's kind of when to start looking at those. The NHS organisation, so within County Durham NHS Trust there's over 100 apprentices in County Durham site, that's another kind of large employee within our area.

Engineering and manufacturing industry, at the moment there's about 60 to 70 active live apprenticeships out there to have a look at, so if you're interested in engineering or manufacturing there's various roles, various levels within that, so have a look if you're interested in that for the apprenticeships.

Then we've also got on there construction and business support because there's some large number of apprenticeship takers. Your construction companies, they do tend to again do year-on-year apprentices but depending on what the company decide to bring them out will depend on when they come out.

Business support such as admin as well, there's quite often administration apprenticeships, so again keep an eye out for them but it is a high number of apprenticeships available within business support.

[Text: Making a Strong Application. Tailor your application. Essential and Desirable Criteria. Research employer. Highlight skills and volunteering. Check spelling and grammar.]

[Emma] Yeah so as I was kind of mentioning before a little bit about the application, it's really important that you look at the job description and you look at the essential and desirable criteria and you've got to demonstrate on any application form how you meet at least the essential criteria because that will be looked at when it comes to the shortlisting phase. And it's really, really important particularly if you're applying for a really sort of competitive apprenticeship where they get like a high volume of applicants and they haven't got that many positions.

It's really important as well to spend some time researching the employer because it's highly likely at interview they will ask so what do you know about us, why do you want to work for this company and also if you do, do anything sort of outside of you know school or college, make sure that you're highlighting your skills in terms of, you know if you do go volunteering, or if you are part of a football team, or you know you do something sort of outside of that then really sort of emphasise the skills that you've developed from doing that. As well and as well before submitting your application please, please, please check your spelling and the grammar. Sometimes people can send in documents, and it can be full of errors, and it just doesn't look great, chances are you won't be shortlisted if it's full of errors.

Also, just a little sort of word on the use of AI and things like Copilot, Gemini, just be sort of mindful when you are or if you are using sort of tools like that. They are a great tool but perhaps only as a starting point, you do still need to be presenting and writing as if you know it's come from you, and employers are very good at sort of seeing through when people have actually used AI, and then the person sat in front of them just is not the person that they thought it was sitting in front of them, so just be mindful when you are using those tools.

[Lucy] Yeah, just off that as well, you know, if you put the job description in AI it can produce a very similar or the same application as someone else. So yeah, like Emma says just be mindful of that.

[Text: Interview Tips. Prepare examples. Show enthusiasm. Ask questions. Arrive on time.]

[Lucy] Some interview tips. Interviewing, just make sure you prepare examples and there's I don't know many employers that don't allow you to take notes in to interview, so if you do the right prep speak to the employer you know make sure you've got those examples.

Examples you need to make sure that you tell the whole story from the start, the middle and the very end as well, make sure you show an impact of what you've done and how you've done it. And make sure you kind of talk to them about how you got to where you've got to now and just make sure you've got those specific examples, rather than just a general example.

Show enthusiasm in the interview, you can be quite chatty with them, you can be on a personal level because that's probably what they'll want to see, you know they're not looking for someone who is kind of like just stood there wanting to talk, just talking to you. You know show a bit of personality through your interview.

Ask questions at the end of your interview, you'll always get asked if you have any questions for the employer and make sure that you make some notes about what questions you would like to ask that employer. It could be about you know like the what's it like to work for this company, what does your job look like on a day-to-day basis, those sorts of questions and it can also help you make a decision after interview as well. And just make sure you arrive on time, that's a really big one, either early or on time is always best. If you're late it doesn't always look good so just make sure that you arrive on time.

[Text: What to do now? Create CV. Register job alerts. Research vacancies. Apply consistently. Call employers you would like to work for. Apply to local college for apprenticeship opportunities.]

[Emma] And this one sounds really obvious, sorry Lucy just to jump in there, but just be mindful of you know kind of what you're wearing as well. So, you know smart, it doesn't necessarily have to be sort of a shirt and tie or you know but first impressions do count, so I would always sort of suggest erring on the side of caution, pair of black trousers and a shirt or you know a skirt or whatever, and some smart shoes and if you are sort of thinking well I haven't got anything like that and I can't really afford it, if you kind of speak to DurhamWorks we might be able to help you with that.

Yep, so what to do now, I always think it's useful as a starting point to just start to put together a CV if you don't already have one. You don't necessarily need a CV for an apprenticeship, it usually is an application form, however if you are going to go out in person to sort of see employers or you're going to ring them and then sort of email stuff after, a CV can be a really useful starting point and it can help sort of outline all the sort of experience and everything that you've got to bring to a role.

Register for job alerts, so going back to sort of North East Jobs you can register for alerts there and you can register for alerts on other sites as well. Really do some research into the vacancy, really have a think about what it is that you want to do and again Durham Works can kind of help you with that.

Apply consistently and really be persistent as well, it can be quite tricky to get an apprenticeship because they are so popular but again you know being resilient and making sure that you don't give up the first time that you don't get an interview.

Call the employers you would like to work for, as I say it really helps sort of you to stick in their mind so if they don't have anything at the moment, they might keep your details and then give you a call back later and apply to your local college for apprenticeship opportunities because they also have their own. So, if you go on to any college website, they'll usually have sort of like a specific area for apprenticeships and you can go on and see what they've got available as well.

[Text: Questions and Support. Any questions? DurhamWorks are here to help if you are finishing Year 11, college or are currently unemployed, for further support please contact us on DurhamWorks. Durhamworks.gov.uk 03000262930.]

[Lucy] Thank you for your time everyone for coming along to this webinar, I hope you've managed to learn something. If there is any questions, please put them in the chat and we can get those answered for you.

We just want to add in there as well we're a service called DurhamWorks, we're here to help you if you've just finished year 11, finished college or currently unemployed. If you need any further help or support and you're between the ages of 16 to 24 please get in touch on there and we can give you a call and maybe give you a hand looking for some apprenticeships.