



Employer Guide & Best Practice

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships remain the most effective means of bringing the next generation of skilled workers into the historic and classic vehicles industry. A shrinking talent pool, particularly for engineering, coachbuilding and trimming skills, can only be rectified by training and passing on skills and knowledge to the workforce of tomorrow.

Accessing funding support and investing in apprenticeships helps future-proof your business by equipping you with the specific skills you need and fostering an environment for long-term employee progression and retention.

1. Benefits for Employers

Offering Apprenticeship opportunities can:

- Secure the right skills tailored to your business
- Provide access to new ideas and perspectives
- Develop your future talent
- Improve recruitment and retention
- Develop leadership skills in existing staff
- Access funding through the Apprenticeship Levy

Many Apprentices gain their first experiences through placement or internship programmes, and once completing their training, they frequently become long-term employees. Both you and the Apprentice share the journey on getting to know each other, developing skills, and shaping expectations, work ethic and fit within your organisation's culture.

2. What Makes a High-Quality Apprenticeship?

Apprentices should be integrated from the outset as valued team members, many of whom will go on to become the leaders of our industry in decades to come.

Encouragement, support and guidance throughout their training should be integrated with work that is challenging and allows for personal development.

3. Levels of Apprenticeships

There are four levels of apprenticeships, with the historic and classic vehicles industry usually seeking Advanced (Level 3). Higher levels are likely to apply to OEMs and more complex areas, including electrification and the fuels industry.

The four apprenticeship levels are:

- Foundation & Intermediate (Level 2) - GCSE equivalent

- Advanced (Level 3) - A levels equivalent
- Higher (Levels 4,5,6 and 7) - Foundation degree and above
- Degree (Levels 6 and 7) - Bachelor's or Master's degree

Some apprenticeships may also enable an additional qualification, such as a diploma.

4. The Apprenticeship Levy & Funding

Employers can access funding towards the cost of training and assessment. The amount you get depends on whether you pay the Apprenticeship Levy or not.

Funding is allocated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) from the Apprenticeship Levy Fund on behalf of the Employer and is drawn down by the employer's chosen Training Provider. Funds can only be used to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment for apprentices.

The Apprenticeship Levy, is a requirement for all Employers with a wage bill over £3 million each year, regardless of whether they employ Apprentices or not. It is paid at a rate of 0.5% of the monthly payroll. Businesses that qualify will have a Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account and an understanding of how the scheme is funded and accessed.

However, many HCVA members will fall under the £3 million payroll threshold and therefore do not contribute directly to the Levy Fund.

For businesses of this size, the following scheme applies:

- Age 16-21 years - The government will pay 100% of Apprenticeship training costs.
- Age 22 years and over - the government funds 95% and the Employer pays the remaining 5% direct to the Training Provider. This is referred to as co-investing.

The government will also pay Employers £1,000 for each 16-18 year old enrolled on an apprenticeship, irrespective of the size of the company. This is paid in 2 stages and is to recognise the additional costs/support that may be required when recruiting a young person.

For further information, see [GOV.UK – Employing an Apprentice](https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice)

5. Choosing a Training Provider

Employers should assess potential Training Providers for:

- Relevance of the apprenticeship programme to their specific requirements
- Quality of the programme they deliver and the package of support they offer
- Reputation of the provider within the industry

6. Benefits of partnering with Heritage Skills Academy

The HCVA has an affiliation with Heritage Skills Academy, who are expertly placed to support HCVA members to source, recruit and train the next generation of heritage engineers for the historic and classic vehicles sector. They have earned a reputation for finding and recruiting reliable, interested and enthusiastic apprentices.

Heritage Skills Academy operates a choice of two Advanced (Level 3) programmes - Mechanical Engineering or Coachbuilding and Trimming. The training is provided by experts from across the restoration industry who are committed to preserving the skills, knowledge and enthusiasm required to maintain and restore the world's finest classic motor vehicles.

The Apprenticeship lasts three years, and Apprentices spend 9 weeks a year on Block Release training at either Bicester Heritage or Brooklands Museum custom-built academies. All employers

receive information on what their apprentices will be learning and receive a feedback report at the end of each off-job training week. Open communication means you always know how your apprentice is progressing to support their development in the workplace.

Heritage Skills Academy's Service

- Visiting each employer to establish their training needs, explain the apprenticeship offer and ensure each party understands their role
- Writing advertisements and promoting vacancies on behalf of the employer
- Conducting initial assessments and shortlisting candidates for interview
- Discussing each shortlisted applicant with the employer
- Organising interviews and trials
- Delivering high-quality off-the-job training and work-based assessment over 36 months
- Producing world-class Heritage Engineering Technicians

7. At-a-Glance Checklist

- Apprentices must have a contract of employment
- Provide a competitive wage and meet minimum wage conditions
- Working week not to exceed 40 to 46 hours per week, including paid college attendance (dependent upon age)
- Holiday entitlement of at least 20 days per annum plus bank holidays (as per government legislation)
- Carry out induction training
- Comply with all relevant statutory duties in respect of supervision, Health & Safety training, welfare and PPE
- Maintain adequate Employers' Liability/Public Liability Insurance
- Release the apprentice from work to attend formal paid off-the-job training

8. Pay & Conditions

Apprentices are considered part of the normal workforce and earn a minimum of the National Minimum Wage or Living Wage, including during their training.

Employers are required to cover any necessary travel, accommodation and subsistence costs with relation to training whilst on block release.

Employers should review government guidance to ensure compliance at [GOV.UK National Minimum Wage & National Living Wage](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage)

Note: Employers do not pay Class 1 National Insurance (NI) contributions for apprentices under 25 on approved schemes earning below £50,270 annually (£967/week). This exemption (Category H) applies only to employer contributions; apprentices still pay their own employee NI if they earn over certain thresholds.

9. Training Costs

Apprentices aged 16 to 21:

No cost to the employer for the delivery of the training to the apprentices.

Apprentices starting over the age of 22:

Employers must make a 5% contribution to the Training Provider towards the cost of the delivery of the training.

Travel, subsistence and accommodation costs are covered by the Employer where the apprentice requires accommodation Monday to Thursday.

10. Responsibilities of the Employer

Adopting best employment practices and a structured induction sets the tone for the entire apprenticeship. A strong start improves confidence, engagement, and long-term success.

Best practices and requirements include:

- Appointing a named Workplace Mentor for the Apprentice
- Providing a comprehensive workplace tour and progressive induction
- Paying particular attention to Health & Safety awareness and training
- Setting clear expectations and do not assume knowledge
- Ensuring regular check-ins and encouraging questions
- Supporting inclusion through equal access to opportunities and accommodating diversity and specific needs
- Implementing a progressive increase in expectations and task complexity over the course of the apprenticeship. Year 3 should look very different to Year 1
- Maintaining close engagement with the Training Provider

11. Responsibilities of the Apprentice

- Attending work and college, and to effectively use any study time in the working day as agreed with the employer
- Working in a diligent and trustworthy manner to achieve the training qualifications within the programme timescale
- Behaving in a responsible manner and to promote the Employer's best interests
- Requesting advice and assistance immediately if needed from the Employer or Training Provider
- Abiding by the principles of the Employer's and Training Provider's Equality & Diversity Policy

12. Useful Resources

Below are some useful links for further information:

[GOV.UK – Employing an Apprentice](https://www.gov.uk/employing-an-apprentice)

[Apprenticeships.GOV.UK](https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk)

[Heritage Skills Academy](https://www.heritage-skills.academy)

13. Disclaimer

This guide provides general best practice information and does not constitute legal advice. Employers should refer to official government guidance or seek professional advice where necessary.