

ASK Webinar: How to search and apply for apprenticeships

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Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to today's ASK Webinar 'How to search and apply for apprenticeships'. My name is Anna Morrison. I'm the founder and Director of Amazing Apprenticeships and I'm going to be with you for the next half an hour to try and demystify this big question of how to search and apply for apprenticeships.

Now we're going to be taking you through a presentation which will probably last about 15-20 minutes and then we will have the opportunity for questions and I will do my very best to answer them for you. We've got a really brilliant mixed audience today. I know we've got a number of parents and carers, we've got lots of teachers and careers advisers and we have aspiring apprentices themselves. So we have students and those who are looking to access opportunities. So I hope we're going to be able to support you all. Put me to the test, go on, send through lots of questions and let's see what we can get to at the end.

So we're using the webinar function today which means that we can't hear or see you. So please don't worry about anything that's going on in the background. But that doesn't mean that we don't want you to be involved. So as I said, there is a Q&A box which if you are on a laptop or a tablet will probably be at the bottom of your screen and if you're on a phone you may need to swipe left or right for it to appear. But it would be great if you submit questions through to us. The recording and slides will be emailed out to you afterwards. So don't worry, you're going to get everything you need with all of the links as well.

Now we've only got half an hour together and actually this is a huge topic, one that I could talk to you for hours on, but I'm not going to do that. We're going to try and cover as much as we can and then I would really encourage you to perhaps look at some of the other webinars that are coming up in the schedule throughout the year or to go back and look at some of the recordings as well because we've covered lots and lots of different angles around apprenticeships. So if there's anything that I mentioned today and you think I'm not quite sure what that is, then do have a look at that catalogue of opportunities or drop us a line, send us an email. We're very happy to help.

Now, first of all, we're going to launch a poll because I'm really interested to see your feedback. So what do you think is the most challenging part of securing an apprenticeship? So we'd love to you to put a vote in, please. So you can see we've got finding the right vacancies, finding vacancies in the right area, juggling deadlines, having enough time to spend on each application, dealing with rejection, something else. You can type that into the Q&A box if you like. But it would be really interesting to just get a bit of feedback from you all. So I can see lots and lots of votes coming in. We'll keep it open for a couple more minutes for you to see. We've actually got, we've got two clear front runners. So, still voting, still trying to decide which one. Obviously it could actually be one of all of these, but we just wanted to try and get a sense from you today of the top issues.

So if we now share these results with you, what we can see the top one is finding vacancies in the right area and finding the right vacancies. So those two coming in 48% and 35%. And then we've got a couple of others around dealing with rejection or something else. So at some point my colleague Helen, who's on the line, will

go into that Q&A box and, and I'm sure will pass me a little summary of some of those points that are coming through. Thank you. That really helps me to know that we are on the right track because this is what we're going to be covering.

So searching: where and how to look effectively. So there's loads of platforms out there. We're going to take you straight to some of the top ones that you should be looking at and the things that you need to know. Then we're going to look at the application process and really go into some of that detail about what to expect. And then we will talk to you about some of the support that's available, so how schools and colleges and parents and carers can all support aspiring apprentices with that search and application process. I hope that sounds all right. I'm talking quite quickly because we've got a huge amount to cover, so let's get going.

First of all, some of the key facts around apprenticeships. Now, fact number one, apprenticeships are advertised in different places. Apprenticeships are real jobs. So unlike perhaps if you were applying to university and you might go through one central platform, one central website. Apprenticeships, because they're real jobs, employers can decide where they advertise and when they advertise. Now, in a couple of slides, I'm going to talk to you about some of the top websites that you need to know about to make sure that you are receiving alerts and signed up for those. But one of the key things with apprenticeships is to really think about securing an apprenticeship, like securing a real job. So in the same way that if you were job hunting, you would be looking on social media, you would be going on to job sites, you would perhaps be going onto employers own websites. And in the olden days we used to look in the back of the newspaper, didn't we, and kind of look at our local newspaper. But you know, it's really all of those skills are exactly the same for apprenticeships.

With apprenticeships they are real jobs, which means that we will see apprenticeship positions created throughout the year. There is not one opening date and there is not one deadline for applying. So again, the same as real jobs, what you will find is employers will advertise based on the needs of their business. Now some of the big employers will be able to advertise, you know, they'll know their budgets, they'll know how many apprentices they're going to take on and they will know that they need to advertise sometimes as early as like, September/October time for their apprentices to start the following September/October. So for some employers, for some of the biggest, most competitive programmes, that recruitment process may take up to 12 months.

For other opportunities, and particularly with smaller businesses and medium-sized businesses, we do find that sometimes their apprenticeship needs are going to be a bit more immediate. So perhaps they may have a member of staff leave or they might win a new contract or a piece of work, or decide to expand into a new product or service and that might be what prompts them to create an apprenticeship. Now that could happen at any time in the year. It's not necessarily going to be linked to the academic year because that employer is going to be thinking, well, I've got vacancies that I need to fill, so I'm going to advertise them. So with some employer vacancies on apprenticeships, you'll find that some of them will advertise, they maybe will close a couple of weeks later, then the recruitment shortlisting process will commence and then it could be a number of weeks or months until that apprentice is in position. And then with some of the bigger schemes, you'll find that that process is a lot longer.

Now with the deadlines as well, I do want to talk to you about how employers advertise because again, with some of the biggest apprenticeship programmes you will find that they will have a closing date for applications. But one of my biggest tips for you is please don't work to that deadline and kind of use that as the final moment that you could submit your application. For some of the apprenticeship programmes that are really

over subscribed, if employers receive enough applications of a good enough quality and they think, actually we've got a really good set of applicants here, they will close early and they are allowed to. So the problem we've got, I think, is, you know, we all get trained up our whole lives, don't we, to work to the deadlines. When have I got to hand that in? Or what's the latest date for submission? You really need to flip that with apprenticeships.

I will often talk about something called being apprenticeship application ready. We've got a webinar on this as well. You can go and watch it. And it's all about making sure that you've got everything ready so when you see an apprenticeship that you're interested in, you are ready to apply and you can get your application in quickly rather than sitting on it for a few weeks, because if you do, you may find that you miss out.

Now with apprenticeship applications, another big question we get is around entry requirements. How come some employers will ask for English and maths, other employers might ask for A-levels or UCAS points, other employers may say, we don't have any entry requirements, we're looking for you to show us passion and interest and, you know, we want to get you in and we will teach you everything you need to know about working in our organisation. Again, this can be quite confusing for people who are looking at apprenticeship vacancies and thinking, well, why is it so different? And the reason it's so different is we have apprenticeships at different levels and employers can decide the entry requirements that they put onto their apprenticeship programmes. So it is really important to do your research. You may be surprised at some of the employers with really brilliant schemes and actually they're saying, we don't require you to necessarily have English and maths before you come on the programme because we can help you to achieve that whilst you are an apprentice on the programme with us, which is really good to see and of course you're going to see a whole mix in there.

You will also find that employers have different application processes so there isn't one set process. Some employers will have fairly simple apprenticeship application processes, which may be that you go to their website and you submit a CV and maybe a covering letter. Other employers will have quite lengthy apprenticeship application processes. Sometimes you may need to go to their website, you might need to set up an account on their website and then you may need to upload a CV, sometimes evidence of qualifications. You may go through different kind of testing and psychometric testing and things like that. So again, what you experience from an application process will vary. And again, we've got more webinars on this so you can get into more detail.

And the other thing is there is no limit to the number of applications that you can put in for apprenticeships. So this is where it's really different to when you're applying for maybe full-time university. With apprenticeships you can apply for as many as you want to, but what I would say is just don't apply for so many that you can't handle the admin that goes with it. Because with every apprenticeship application the employer is going to perhaps be asking you to undertake different assessments, send them information by a certain date, attend interviews, attend assessment centres. And so it really is about, you know, apply for as many as you want to, but do try and have a really good system to manage all of that admin and remember which ones you've applied for and which ones you've heard back from and which ones you haven't so you know where you're at.

So let's move on to talk about where you can find apprenticeship vacancies. I told you there were lots of different ways, didn't I? So there's just some of them appearing on the screen now. First of all, I want to let you know about the government apprenticeship system. It's called Find an apprenticeship. It's a great system, it's a really good starting point. Thousands of apprenticeship vacancies are advertised on Find an apprenticeship. Employers don't have to use this platform though, and some employers decide that actually they've got their own systems on their own websites and they will handle the applications through that. Other employers who

perhaps don't have those systems like smaller employers may say, brilliant, let's get it on Find an apprenticeship because it manages the whole thing. It's free of charge to use. I would really encourage you to set up an account. Parents, carers, if you're on the call, or teachers, careers, advisers, you can set up an account as well as aspiring apprentices. There's no there's no age limit on it. You don't, you know, you can set up an account and you can get working on it. You can also, one of the biggest tips with Find an apprenticeship, is set it up to send you alerts so that you can have the system do the hard work for you. There is another webinar coming up later at the end of February where we go through this system in a lot of detail. So take a look at that one.

Employer websites. So like I said, employers can decide to advertise through their own website. So if you know an employer that you particularly want to look at, you can go onto their website. Another thing I've noticed employers doing quite a lot of is kind of keep in touch services. So even if you go to their website and they're not currently recruiting, often you can now sign up or subscribe to a kind of mailing to be kept informed when they do go live with new vacancies. UCAS are now advertising apprenticeships as well. So they will take a feed and that's a weird word, isn't it? It's called a feed, it's like a technological or technology word where basically they can pull through all of those vacancies from Find an apprenticeship and then they work with other employers as well who will add their vacancies onto that site. And there are hundreds, thousands probably of jobs websites out there. Many names that you will know, I'm sure, from the media, where you can go on and you can search for apprenticeships as well. Social media is your friend with apprenticeships. We often find that employers, when they start recruiting, as well as adding information to their websites, they will often shout about their vacancies on social media. So this is the one time parents, carers, teachers, careers advisers, you'll be saying to your students, get yourself on social media, make sure you're following the accounts. My tip on this is make sure you're following the careers handle. So if, for example, you were to follow Tesco, you might find out all about their lovely new products and a new brand of tomato sauce or something. But you need to be following Tesco Careers to make sure that you're finding out about their vacancies.

Friends and family are hugely important, so making sure that when you know that you're looking for an apprenticeship, you tell absolutely everyone you can think of. Friends, family, neighbours... I don't know, anyone who walks past your door. Anyone you can think of really, who might be eyes and ears out there, helping to let you know when vacancies come up.

We, Amazing Apprenticeships, twice a year we create what's called the Higher and Degree listing. We're very excited because the new edition is coming out next week featuring I think 2,400 more than 2,400 higher and degree vacancies. So that's a physical listing that comes out that you can access from our website, you can download it and kind of print it off and Vacancy snapshot, which is a new, relatively new feature that we've introduced, which is a free monthly newsletter that you can subscribe to. And what we try to do is we, we talk to lots of employers across the country and we say to them, look, if you're recruiting any apprenticeship, any level, any location, send it over and we'll add it to our newsletter. So that's what we do through Vacancy snapshot. So loads of ways that you can keep on top of the different apprenticeship vacancies that are out there.

Let's talk about searching effectively then. So just a few that I'm going to run through. Make sure that you do look at the job role and that you don't get too fixated on the level. Now, if I had a pound for every time I had a parent say, now my child would like a degree apprenticeship please, and you say, what would they like it in? And they're like, well, I don't know, but they want a degree apprenticeship. You need to flip that. So it's much more about thinking around the job role and the employer that you might want to work for. Please don't worry about the level. Okay? So it's much more about what's the job role, what are the experiences and opportunities

they're going to get? Because the brilliant thing about apprenticeships is you don't have to just do one apprenticeship. The whole idea is that you can progress through the different levels. So don't restrict your searches to those levels and try to make sure that you're keeping a really open mind. We see amazing apprenticeship opportunities advertised as intermediate and advanced apprenticeships all the way through to degrees so it's important that you look at the full range.

Don't assume the higher the level, the higher the salary. Again, we see many apprenticeships that are advertised at intermediate and advanced level that actually pay more than some of the higher and degree apprenticeship vacancies that we see advertised. So there isn't necessarily a pattern that links the level to the salary. Not all apprenticeships are actually available at degree level. So again, for some roles, for some industries, you're going to need to start your apprenticeship, your route into that industry, and the career will be through perhaps an intermediate or advanced apprenticeship. And then by the time you get to degree level, that's really when you're going to be managing within that organisation or across a department within that industry. So there are, again, there are other webinars that we've done that really explore the different levels and help you to understand all of that. Progression is not always linear either. So it's not always necessary that you're going to do A-levels and then progress straight onto a degree apprenticeship. And this can be quite hard to understand because we're kind of taught in that way, aren't we? So we're used to people completing their A-levels and then they go to full-time university. So why wouldn't the same happen for apprenticeships? Well, the difference is these are real jobs. So often the degree apprenticeships, I mean it can be done, there are certain roles where you can progress from school into a degree apprenticeship. But often what we find is employers will tell us the starting point is an advanced apprenticeship. You'll do that for 18 months and then you can progress.

So really summing up all of those bullet points, if you only look at degree apprenticeships, you could be missing out on some incredible opportunities at the other levels. Consider also how wide your search area could be. Now when you go onto some of these sites, sometimes it'll ask you to put your home postcode in and then a radius. So you might be thinking, well, okay, we could travel within 10 miles, 15 miles. What I would encourage you to do is think a bit more broadly. So can you think about the train station that you live closest to and where would you be comfortable travelling to on that train line? And then maybe you do a radius search around that train station, kind of the destination. Where is it that I would want to get to or I can get to and then thinking about how far away from the train station you would be happy to travel. So that's another trick really to try and broaden your search.

A few more bullet points, if we, we'll bring up a few. So don't discount employers that you haven't heard of. I think sometimes it can be easy to have your head turned by the incredible names, you know, the household brands that you've heard of and you think, well, I associate them with quality so their apprenticeships are probably incredible. Absolutely. But also there will be loads of local smaller businesses in your home town, in your village, in your city that you may not have heard of that will have incredible schemes. Think about employers of all sizes, not just those big employers. Employers may offer apprenticeships you don't expect them to. I was actually talking yesterday to a car hire company and they were telling me that they have finance and accountancy apprentices, they have solicitor apprentices and all sorts of HR functions and marketing as well. So again, I think when you're talking to your child about apprenticeships, they may think if they're looking for a finance apprenticeship, that they, they need to start by looking at finance firms. And of course, that is one angle, but also do think about some of those companies that might have them as part of their whole organisation structure. If you see something you're not ready to apply for yet, then you can always make a note of it and you can come back to it the following year. So you may see, depending on, you know, your age and your stage, then it could be that you think, actually, this is going to be brilliant for in a year's time. National

Apprenticeship Week is coming up on the 10th of February. You can absolutely keep an eye out for employers that are launching their programmes or shouting about their programmes that week because they probably will be recruiting the following year.

Okay. And you can talk to current and former apprentices as well. Again, during National Apprenticeship Week, you will see loads of apprentices out and about sharing their stories. So, yeah, there are... these are some of the other resources that we've got there to help you. So I talked about Get apprenticeship 'application ready'. We've also got a checklist that you can download which hopefully will help you as well. OK, we're going to move on because I know we want to get through to lots of questions.

Now with the apprenticeship application process, I touched on this, didn't I, saying employers will do it differently and they absolutely will. So employers will, they can decide how they recruit. What you're seeing on the screen here could be involved in any apprenticeship application process and recruitment process. They may pick just one or two of these. They may have lots and lots of different ones. And these are the kind of things that we need to get ready for. So there's loads more information in a guide there called Applying for an Apprenticeship. Some of these you'll be familiar with, some of them you may be less familiar with, like, assessment days. And you might want to know about physical tests involved in, for example, the Army or the Metropolitan Police. So we've got other information that we can get you on those as well. But please don't think that every apprenticeship application process is going to be the same because it really does vary between employer to employer.

Okay, so some of the top application tips. So we'll bring all of these up on the screen and I will pick just a few out for you. I've touched on some of them already. But, you know, please, when you're looking at apprenticeship vacancies, try and keep an open mind. Try and think about those key dates. Remember what I said about some of them that might close early. You're not limited to just one apprenticeship application, so don't put your eggs in one basket. Make sure that you're applying for a few different opportunities. Sometimes when I'm coaching potential apprentices, I'll talk to them about putting a wild card in as well, kind of, you know, perhaps look at some vacancies that you never would have considered and see what you can find out by looking at that employer and finding out about their programme.

A few of you did tick or did select earlier when we did the poll around rejection and kind of handling that resilience. And this is, you know, the same for all job searching, isn't it. And we do find that one of, you know, there are lots of different ways that you can handle that and kind of build up the resilience of particularly the young people that you might be supporting. But that learning and reflection and taking time to really think about, what could I have done differently? What might I adapt for next time? Even asking for feedback from the employer. Now, they're not always going to be able to provide it, but some will, and that can be really useful in preparing for the next application and taking that forward.

Okay, we're going to click through a few more slides for you because we have got some questions that have come through and we want to be able to take them. And whilst I'm doing that, I'm going to ask my colleague to also show, just slowly, a few of the other slides that have got links on to get us ready because I want to make sure we finish on time for you. So we've had a question about, so I'm in year 13, I'm looking now. Am I too late? Is there not going to be very much out there? There will be. So there will be some programmes that will have already started their application process and will have closed and that will have happened in the autumn. However, the higher and degree apprenticeship listing that I mentioned, that's coming out next week, you know, there's over 80 really big employers who are launching their programmes and they're going live. So they're either live now or going live in the future. And we see advertise apprenticeships advertised throughout

the year, so you're never too late. I mean, obviously, if there is a particular scheme that you're interested in and if that has already closed, then you may have missed that opportunity. But it's really important, you know, apprenticeships, new apprenticeships get announced every day of the week throughout the year so do keep looking and let us know if we can help you.

Another question from a parent who has a child with special needs and who didn't achieve his GCSE maths, which appears to be mandatory for an apprenticeship, any advice here? Okay, so there will be employers who will advertise that they require English, maths GCSEs as part of their entry requirements. Like I said, there will be employers who don't as well. What I would recommend is if there is a vacancy that you really do want to apply for and one of the requirements is English and maths it's still worth putting an application in and explaining that you unfortunately, although they don't hold it currently, you would be willing to work towards it and kind of try to get that passion and interest and commitment across. It's not guaranteed to work. But actually, if an employer is really impressed with the rest of the application, then it may be something that, because with apprenticeships you can do your English and maths as part of the apprenticeship, that's built in. So I think it's always worth trying.

Trickiest thing: dealing with competition, competition for places. Yeah. Now apprenticeships are really increasing in popularity and we see some schemes that are hugely oversubscribed and we do see others that are not. Now we used to get some data on this from the Department for Education. Unfortunately, it's stopped for now, but we used to be able to see how many people had applied for those different positions. I would really encourage you to reach out to training providers, reach out to colleges, to independent training providers, to universities, and see if they might be able to support you. Thinking about how to give yourself the competitive edge or thinking about how you prepare for the recruitment process. Again, we're not going to have time to get into it today, but there are other webinars that we've done where we've got employers who have come on and talked about kind of what makes an individual stand out, what are they looking for, and some of those might provide some really good hints and tips.

So if a young person has passed their GCSEs, would that be a level 2 or could they be accepted for a level 3? Either/or, actually. So again, this is where it's really about the job role, not necessarily about the level. So I'm going to use hairdressing as an example. Now, if you're training up as a hairdressing apprentice, you will start as a level 2, regardless of whether you've got A-levels. You could have a degree, you could have a Master's degree. You don't know how to cut and colour hair and I don't know about you, but I wouldn't want someone taking to my hair who hasn't had that training. So that's a really good example of actually, regardless of your prior qualifications, unless you've got experience, everyone starts at the same point. However there are some differences. So perhaps if, depending on what you've studied at GCSE and any experience and the level of the job role that the employer is looking at, it could be possible to go on to a level 3. So this, this again is where you need to do your research and have a look at the roles. I appreciate it is complicated.

We're going to try and get a couple more questions in. You're doing amazingly. I asked you to put me to the test, didn't I? And you are. Someone saying, I want a level 4 apprenticeship but most out there are level 3. What gives? Okay, so again, I really hope that I am getting across to you today. It is not about the level, it is about looking at the job role and progression opportunities. There are actually many employers who may take on apprentices at level 3, so advanced level, and then they don't bother with level 4. You get leapfrogged into perhaps a level 5 or straight onto a degree apprenticeship. So try not to think about the levels and fixate on those too much. It's much more about looking at the organisation, looking at what they're saying about how they're going to progress you, how they're going to support you and seeing if you can identify those vacancies that might be better suited to you.

And what have we got? Where can I find creative apprenticeships? I've only found four journalism apprenticeships. Now there are creative apprenticeships out there, but some sectors as you know, when you start your apprenticeship job search, you will find that some sectors have many more apprenticeships than others. I would encourage you to look at some of the sector sites for creative and creative arts because they sometimes have listings as well as some of the ones on Find an Apprenticeship. So it might be about looking for some of those specialist recruitment sites where you can find those opportunities.

I think we're out of time just about, aren't we? Thank you so much for coming along and joining us. I hope you have found it useful. We've packed a lot into half an hour but we really, really want to support you. So everything is available on our website. Everything's free of charge on our website. If you've got questions please email hello@amazingapprenticeships.com We've got a brilliant team who are ready to pick up your questions, to signpost you to the right places, to provide you with anything you need. That's why I founded this organisation. We love helping people, we want to help you. So good luck in your search and application for apprenticeships.

Please look out for more information, particularly around the 10th to the 16th of February, National Apprenticeship Week. A great opportunity for you to get out into your community, go in and visit employers, hear from apprentices, hear from employers as well and I'm sure schools and colleges have got hundreds of activities happening as well. So if you are at school or college, then your school or college will be able to support you. And many of those events are for parents as well, parents and carers.

So thank you. Yeah thank you. And we will send the recording and the slides out to you all. And we look forward to seeing you on a future webinar. Thank you so much. Bye.