

ASK Webinar: Understanding apprenticeships

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Helen Twomey:

Brilliant. Good, numbers are creeping up quickly. Welcome if you're just joining us. Yeah everyone's coming in, so I think we'll... I'll get started and then, as people are joining now.

So welcome to this October ASK webinar funded by the Department of Education as part of the ASK programme. So our second one this academic year and we have one every month, which I'll talk to you a bit more about later on. So today's session is Understanding Apprenticeships. And it's a chance to kind of, last month we talked more generally about technical education opportunities and apprenticeships and this is kind of a real bit more of a deep dive into apprenticeships themselves.

So thank you very much if you've joined us today. And/or if you're watching on record as well. So, just a couple of things. My name is Helen Twomey. I'm the Schools and Resources Manager at Amazing Apprenticeships. Today's session is in webinar function, which I'm sure you all know. It's being recorded and the recording and the slides will be sent afterwards. So you'll get a mailing afterwards which will have the recording, slides, it will also have any sort of useful links and things that you can click through. Anything we mention that's not in the slides, we'll make sure is in that mailing as well. And finally, we've got lots of advanced questions in, which is brilliant. We will cover some of those, but there's also a Q&A box where you can put in any questions that you might have for us today - we will try and get through as many as we can. But yeah, please get in touch and I'll tell you how to do that if there are any we are unable to answer today or we don't get to.

So we're going to move swiftly on then. We've got a quick 2 poll question for you, which is how would you rate your knowledge and understanding of apprenticeships? So you might be here with some knowledge or lots of knowledge or no knowledge at all. So we'd like to know that if possible. And how confident do you feel in supporting young people who are interested in finding apprenticeships? If you are a young person, and I know that we do get young people joining these webinars, how confident do you feel in finding one? So, yeah, flip that question a little bit for you. I'll launch that poll now. So if you're happy to just click. So it's a naught to five, so naught being sort of absolutely no understanding and five being, yeah, quite good understanding. Brilliant. So we're sitting mostly around the middle at the moment in terms of that. And then how confident do you feel, so not at all confident, slightly confident, somewhat confident. They're quite similar, aren't they? Slightly. And somewhat. Quite confident. Well, those three are pretty similar. And extremely confident. Okay, so we've got lots of answers. I'm gonna close that in one second. Okay, I'm going to end that poll now so we can get going. So we have a look at the results. So lots of people in the middle, kind of sort of twos and threes, mostly on that first question about knowledge and then the second one again. Yeah. No one feeling extremely confident. We hope after today you'll be on the pathway to feeling extremely confident. So, brilliant. Thank you so much for completing that.

Okay, so really, really lucky to be joined today by Eve Oakley, who is a senior manager in the Youth Apprenticeships Growth Team at the Department for Education and an absolute expert on apprenticeships with a wealth of knowledge and data and stats and just all sorts of things in her head. So we're really, really, really happy to have Eve with us today. Thank you so much for joining us, Eve. I'm going to hand over to you now, if that's okay.

Eve Oakley:

Superb. Thanks ever so much, Helen, and good afternoon, everybody. I'm delighted to be here. The ASK programme does amazing work in schools and colleges. I'm part of quite a small team within the Department for Education and we are dedicated to doing what we can to help more young people get onto apprenticeships. It's not easy. We know it's not easy. But we're looking at all sorts of different initiatives that we can do to make that easier for young people and for the people who support them.

Okay so today I'm going to give a bit of an overview of apprenticeships. So what are apprenticeships? What are the different types of jobs and different levels of jobs that you can do as an apprenticeship? And then crucially, as well, what are the best places to go to find an apprenticeship and how best to increase your chances of applying successfully for one. Thanks, Helen. So what are apprenticeships? Apprenticeships essentially are quite a unique programme because it is a combination of on-the-job employment. So it is a job, but at the same time you get paid time off to study in areas that are directly related to your day job. And for an apprenticeship, you will spend approximately 80% of your time working and then about 20% of your time, that's about one day a week doing training, we call it off-the-job training. It's sort of separate to your day job. So it's not your in-the-job training. It is separate but it must be directly related to that to ensure that what you're learning in that off-the-job training is directly put into practice in your day job.

There are all sorts of different apprentices right the way from GCSE level all the way up to postgraduate degree level. And because there's such a variety, the duration of apprenticeships really varies. It could be anything between one year, right the way up to six years for some of the degree apprenticeships. Most of them are between those, those are the extremes. Most of them are probably between two and three. But just to be aware that the degree and postgraduate ones can be quite significantly longer. The good thing about an apprenticeship is you are paid because it is a job and you have the same rights as an employee. You are paid, you get paid salary and your time spent off-the-job training is also paid for as well. So all apprenticeships are funded by the government or partially by your employer, mostly by the government. So there is no costs at all to an apprentice to undertake this job. You will have real responsibilities, it is a job, you are a real employee. You will have an employment contract and you will also have an apprenticeship agreement as well to really set out what you're going to learn as part of your apprenticeship training and how this will be related to your day job.

There are well over 700 apprenticeships available now. We often say there's definitely an apprenticeship for anybody pretty much no matter what you want to do. I'm sure you can find a relevant apprenticeship for it. And just to note as well that apprenticeships are not the easy option. I think in the past I've certainly spoken to people who seem to think that apprenticeships and technical education more generally is something that's for people who perhaps are less academic or who didn't want to go or couldn't make it in university and that's because they're easier and actually that is not the case. Apprenticeships are competitive to get into, particularly the higher level ones. So you've got to be really resilient and determined just to get the apprenticeship and then when you are in the apprenticeship it can be, particularly if you're doing one of the longer degree courses, it can be quite hard because you've got to do your full-time job and at the same time do the university or higher education degree.

Saying that though you do get lots of support from whoever's providing your training and also your employer and you will get time off and they will work with you to make sure to do the best and to put in place flexibility so that you can succeed in that. But it's not the easy option. Thanks Helen.

So apprenticeships are structured between three key parties really. You have the apprentice yourself you also have your training provider who's responsible for delivering all of the off-the-job training and then you have your employer who is responsible for paying you and for making sure that what's, what you're learning in your off-the-job training is also reflected in your on-the-job learning and the experience that you're getting. And when these three parties work together it can be a really enriching experience. It is quite unique for apprenticeships that you're getting that hands on experience at the same time as learning. And there aren't really any other learning programmes that offer that in the same way. So when the training provider and the employer work closely with the apprentice and the apprentice tells them what they need and that feedback is coming both ways, it can be such an enriching experience. Next slide please. Thank you.

So as I've said, there are well over 700 different occupations that you can do apprenticeships in these days. We have come a long, long way from the times when apprenticeships used to be sort of traditional trades, the carpentry, bricklaying, that type of thing. You can of course still do apprenticeships in those types of occupations, but you can also become a solicitor or a doctor or a fully trained teacher through an apprenticeship as well. And there's all sorts of stuff in between those two as well. Next slide please, Helen. Thank you.

So say a little bit about the different levels of apprenticeship. We sort of assign levels to apprenticeships to give an idea about the size and complexity of that particular programme of work, in the same way that we do for academic qualifications. So broadly speaking the level 2 apprenticeships are roughly sort of around equivalent to GCSE level. Level three, roughly sort of A-levels. And then the level the other end, 6 and 7, are degree level equivalents. Just a warning here though that they don't work quite the same way for apprenticeships as they do for academic levels. So, for example, you wouldn't expect to do a level two apprenticeship, a level three, a level four, a level five, a level six, a level seven. It just doesn't have that same linear way. And in fact, because apprenticeships are occupations, you might find that an apprenticeship at level three in a specific occupation, there isn't one to go on after. And what you would do afterwards for progression would be to be doing some other type of workplace training. So it doesn't follow that you need to follow this linear progression up through the levels. Next slide, please.

So here are some examples of the variety of different occupations that you can do on an apprenticeship. There's everything from sort of accounts, estate agent, data technician, pastry chef, right the way up to engineer, solicitor and even we have a level seven game programmer apprenticeship now. So there really are so many different opportunities at each of these different levels to have a look for and I really do think there is an apprenticeship for pretty much everybody. So a little bit about higher and degree apprenticeships. Degree apprenticeships are amazing, they really are. It's hard work but it's a way to get your degree. They usually, they're either degree level or they actually come with the integrated degree as part of it. So you will study at university and get the same degree as you would if you were doing a full-time course at university. You won't have any fees, there's no debts. You get that experience which you just don't get if you're in a full-time education position. They do take between four and six years, a little bit longer, and they are quite competitive to get into.

For every vacancy for a degree apprenticeship there's dozens, there can be dozens of applicants. So definitely have a look through all these. We have just published in fact with Amazing Apprenticeships published the amazing higher and degree apprenticeships vacancy listing that's literally new, I think hot off the press a couple of days ago. There's a link to it on this slide and we will share the deck afterwards. That's really worth having a look. Because the way that a lot of those apprenticeships work is the employers will advertise them in advance

on this listing. So these are for apprenticeships that will start at the end of this current year. So for current year 13 who are going to finish in July next year, these are the vacancies for that cohort. What's really good about the listing is it shows what kind of previous qualifications might be needed for each of these apprenticeships. It also shows the progression opportunities available, it shows the salaries that we're offering and it shows which companies are offering them and how to apply for them. So that gives you a really good idea about what's available at that higher and degree level. Next slide please.

So here are some of the large employers that offer apprenticeships. I think most large employers in England do have an apprenticeship programme but then also a lot of small and medium-sized companies offer apprenticeships as well. The larger employers do tend to have well-established apprenticeship programmes and they will take on cohorts of apprenticeship, and that can be really good because you're not going to be the only apprentice. There'll be other apprentices being taken on at the same time and you can learn and develop with them. But it's also good in a smaller company as well. In fact sometimes I speak to apprentices and they feel they've had more of a personal experience and they've actually learned a broader breadth of activities working in a smaller employer. So I think there's great opportunities in employers of all sizes. Next slide please.

So how to find an apprenticeship. This is where it gets quite hard only because it's much harder than applying for higher education or a full-time education course in college. But you do need to be resilient and there are lots of opportunities out there. So I would say definitely resilience, get used to churning out application forms or CVs and don't get discouraged. And to make that a bit easier we have a government site called Find an Apprenticeship. It's shown on here. And what we do is we try to get all employers and providers and everybody really who wants to take on an apprentice to actually advertise their vacancy on this site. And the idea about that is it makes it easier because if you're looking for an apprenticeship you don't want to have to trawl around hundreds and hundreds of different jobs boards. It makes it easier if we can get as many as possible onto one place so it makes it easy for you to find. We've just updated the system as well so you can now set certain criteria, you can search in your local area. And what's really good is that you can actually set up email alerts. So if you go on there and you're looking for apprenticeship vacancies in your area, there might be only one or two, they're not suitable... Keep looking because new apprenticeships come up all the time. It's not like the cyclical academic year where everybody starts at the same time. It happens throughout the year. So set up the alerts and you'll get an idea about what sort of vacancies and which companies are hiring in your local area and what they pay and things like that. So it's a really, even if you're not ready to start just yet, set up the alert and you can start seeing what kind of apprenticeships are available locally.

Having said that it's unlikely that we are going to have every single apprenticeship vacancy in England on our site. Some do slip through the loop and particularly sometimes when there's a big company, a big established company and they, they have their own application process, so Jaguar Land Rover or something, for example, that they'll have their own systems right from application all the way through interview and so because of that, I would also recommend, if you know there's a big employer in your local area, have a look on their website. They probably have an apprenticeships programme. See what apprenticeships they're offering, which ones you might like to do. You can contact them as well. Don't be afraid to reach out. Employers really like it if young people are proactive and they reach out and ask a bit about the different apprenticeship programmes, how many places are available and show a bit of initiative that goes quite a long way. Always have a look on social media as well. There's lots of different channels for raising awareness of different apprenticeship opportunities. And talk to your friends and family as well. Quite often people find an apprenticeship without actually looking for it because they know that their auntie works in a company where they have a really good apprenticeship programme and they apply through that way. So there's lots of different, lots and lots of different routes. So yes, be creative when you're looking.

So I always quite like this slide because these are what we call cross sector occupations. So it goes to show that just in any company you would find these types of jobs and no matter what sector it was, it could be a construction company, it could be a marketing company, it could be the NHS. They all have these types of jobs. So things like logistics things like IT, data, sales, security, marketing, HR. An apprenticeship in any one of these disciplines is so versatile because you can take it across any different sectors. You're not tied to one specific sector or industry. So I always think if you're not quite sure what you do want to do, look at one of these, look at one of the media or the communications or the digital ones or good old business admin. And then once you've done that, it's a springboard. It can take you to all sorts of different places and you're not tied to a particular industry or a sector. Next slide, please.

So, as everybody will know, we have a new government which is very exciting, and along with the new administration, we've got some really exciting new developments in the pipeline for apprenticeships. There's not an awful lot to say about these at the moment because all of this is still being worked through. But we've got some really, really good programmes coming out. So one of them would be around foundation apprenticeships. And the idea about this is to help those young people who are not quite ready to actually start in the workplace. So school leavers who might not have any work experience, who need a little bit of extra support, they can undertake one of the foundation apprenticeships. That will just give them a bit more general information about the sector they want to work in, perhaps, and also things like employability skills, timekeeping, communication skills. It's just that extra bit of support to prepare them for the workplace.

We also have the Youth Guarantee being worked on, so this is so that all young people aged 18 to 21 will be supported to find training or employment, and I think this is really, really good. We know how hard it is it can be to, you know, once you leave school, to sort of be out there in the big world and I think people do need a little bit more help. It's still being worked out what that support exactly looks like but it's coming soon and it will hopefully really help those young people as they take their first steps out into the world. And overseeing this we're going to have a new organisation called Skills England. And one exciting thing I think that Skills England is going to do is they're going to look very closely at what sort of industries and what sort of jobs we're going to need in England in different regions as we go through the next decades. And that's exciting because it will help inform young people coming out of school and entering the workplace now, if they're thinking about what career they're going to do, if they know that there's going to be in a certain type of digital career for example, they know that there's going to be people needed in that job going forward 10, 20 years. That gives you an idea about the type of job security. So there's going to be a lot of interesting information and insight coming out of Skills England as well. Thank you, Helen. I'll stop there, shall I?

Helen Twomey:

Yes, but don't go anywhere Eve, because we need you for some questions in a second. Thank you, Eve. That was so, so informative. That was a lot to get through as well. Thank you so much for doing that so clearly. I wanted to cover, because we had lots and lots of advanced questions this time, so I want to try and just quickly cover some of those before we go on to some of the live questions we've had.

So the first one we had was applying. Now, hopefully some of that has been covered in what Eve said today. But we do have another webinar coming up, and I will share the details on how to register at the end of this webinar. But we are next, I believe. What's the title? It's something like: Everything you need to know about applying for apprenticeships. That's not it, but it's something like that. So our next webinar it's on 21st of November, and I will, like I say, I'll share the details, how to sign up, so that's really going to cover lots to do with applying, but we'll also share a couple of things in the mailing that might be useful when it comes to

applying. Had lots of questions, advanced questions about CVs. We... CVs can be required, not always by apprenticeship employers, but we are going to attach also to the mailing some information about how to write a CV, especially with a sort of apprenticeship application, so that, again, will be shared with you in the webinar, in the mailing after the webinar.

Searching. We had loads of questions about searching and I just wanted to flag it because I knew we were going to cover it in this. So there's lots of different ways that you can search for apprenticeships, which Eve has highlighted. For any further questions, do get in touch with us. Loads of specific sector questions. So, around sport, politics, primary teaching, engineering, healthcare, computer engineering, we just had a live question about can you be a pilot on an apprenticeship? Yes, all of those. You can. There will be an apprenticeship in all of those areas that hopefully will suit you. The best place is to start doing your research online. So, yeah, getting online and having a good look what's out there. But, yes, there's a lot of apprenticeships across every sector.

The other one we had a couple of questions about was how apprenticeships are regulated, and again, we'll share something in the mailing about that, about OFQUAL and how they regulate apprenticeships. So just to reassure you on that. So we've then got some other questions that have come through, if that's all right, Eve. So one that's come through just now on the Q&A is what is a training provider?

Eve Oakley:

Good question. That's departmental jargon. I apologise for that. So it's a fancy word for basically the college or the company who's actually going to be delivering your training. So the teacher, the people who hire the teachers. And that can be, it's not always a further education college. It can be a further education college or it can be an independent company who offers training. Just to let you know about that as well, is every single company who is offering apprenticeships has to be rigorously checked and we hold a register of approved apprenticeship providers, which means that if they slack in any of the particular quality criteria, then they are taken off that register and they will not actually be allowed to provide apprenticeships. So we monitor that very carefully to make sure that they are approved and the quality of what they're delivering is good.

Helen Twomey:

Yes, brilliant, thank you. And then another question that's come through which is definitely one that we hear and we know is important is, is it better to do a degree apprenticeship?

Eve Oakley:

Good question. Short answer. No, not necessarily. Degree apprenticeships are great, but everybody makes the mistake of thinking that if they've got level three qualifications for A-levels or BTEC, they think oh my next step has got to be a degree apprenticeship. But actually as I was explaining a little bit during the presentation, apprenticeships don't quite work that way because an apprenticeship is a job, it's not a full-time education course and a lot of the time for a young person leaving the school with little or no work experience, the right entry point is actually a level two or level three apprenticeship, even if they have already got level 3 A-levels or BTECs. My nephew in fact has just started his, he's just finished sixth form and he's just started his level two engineering. And I think he, him and my sister were both questioning why is it level 2? Why can't we just go on to like the higher level? And the reason is particularly in sectors like engineering you're just not ready to enter at those higher levels. You need to get used to the environment, used to the industry, used to that working environment and how to operate in that safely. But progression happens very quickly. You will progress quickly onto next way so it's another path through. So by all means apply for the degree apprenticeships, they are great, they are highly competitive. I would just say don't narrow your search so you're only applying for degree apprenticeships. Look at other ways to get to your, your chosen career or your chosen company.

Helen Twomey:

That's great advice Eve, thank you. And starting at you know, level two or three apprenticeship or four or five doesn't mean that later on if you want to do a degree apprenticeship later on we're not limited to that and we have got another webinar coming up I think in December which talks, which we will talk to an apprentice who used different levels of apprenticeships to progress their career so undertaken more than one which is really interesting.

We've had a few questions actually live and in advance about young people with any additional needs and is there scope in apprenticeships for them?

Eve Oakley:

Yes, there absolutely is and in fact we provide additional funding to providers and employers who take on young people who have special educational needs so they can provide adjustments or flexibilities that they might need to make them, to ensure that they can still access that apprenticeship and they can be successful in their programme. They can offer things such as flexibilities like additional time, having somebody there with you if you're conducting an assessment and a whole range of different flexibilities and there are additional payments if there's a particular piece of equipment or something that is needed, there are additional payments that they can apply for, grants from the government as well. So I would say absolutely, it's, you absolutely can still apply for apprenticeships.

One thing I would say as well though is if you do have special educational needs, bring this up with your training provider, the person who's delivering your learning and your employer right at the start. And the reason for that is they can work together to make sure that they're doing everything they can to ensure that you succeed and you're comfortable and you know what you're doing right from day one. So yeah, don't be afraid to talk about it openly with your training provider and with your employer so that they can put those adjustments in place if needed.

Helen Twomey:

Brilliant. Thank you. We also had a couple of questions about support for apprentices who may be care experienced. So again, we have got some resources and a page on the Amazing Apprenticeships website to support that and there's lots of bursaries and things that can support you. So again, we'll send all that out in the mailing just to make sure we cover all of that, if that's okay with you Eve. Lots of questions coming through so, but we are going to run out of time so I'm so sorry not to answer everybody. If you would like to get in touch and ask some of your questions then I'll share at the end how you can do that because we're running out of time, but there's so many valuable questions. I will try to make sure that the post-webinar mailing covers as many of those as possible. I'm just going to talk you through. I think we've got a minute left. I'm going to talk through a couple of other things.

If you are in a school or college which I know we've got lots of Careers Leaders and teachers here, there's lots of support available from ASK to support you to support your students. So you can access the ASK Explainer film, the ASK brochure, which will explain a bit more about what the ASK programme is. And you can also book a planning meeting and all of that you can find on the careersandenterprise.co.uk page who are managing the ASK programme, and they've got a special page for that and you can access that through the QR code as well. And again the slides will be shared, so don't worry if you're not accessing those now. Other support available, the Amazing Apprenticeships website has got all sorts of resources and webinars and all sorts of things to support you in your apprenticeship search and application process.

The Skills for Careers website also has some brilliant support available. Lots of information and ideas and things that you could be doing to find an apprenticeship. Also, we've got a vacancy mailing that you can sign up to. So it's just a quick Googleform, or Mailchimp form I think, that you can fill in and you'll get an email totally free of course sent to your inbox with up-to-date vacancies. So very, very nearly higher and degree listing, but for all apprenticeships vacancies, at all levels, which is brilliant. Oh, I'm rattling through. Am I speaking really fast to you? Sorry.

Future webinars... I think I've mentioned all of these. So the two articles I mentioned, November and December, Getting apprenticeship application ready. I think someone put that in the chat. Thank you so much. And also Using the levels of apprenticeships to progress your career. So those are both coming up. Understanding T levels. So if you are looking at T levels as an option, if you're here looking at students who are post-16, then there's a webinar on the 19th of November about all about understanding T levels which you can sign up for. All of the registration links for these are on AmazingApprenticeships.com forward slash workshops dash webinars. And again you can find that by clicking that link or looking at the QR code. I'm rushing through this to make sure I can let people go on time.

Choices magazine, if you are a parent or anyone else, indeed here, parent or carer particularly this is aimed at, but absolutely useful for anybody else, interested students or potential apprentices or school teachers or Careers Leaders, whatever. It's a magazine that is completely free and it's a monthly magazine and you can sign up by clicking the link or scanning the QR code. You just get it emailed to you each month, but sort of towards the late end of each month. It also sits on the Amazing Apprenticeships website at all times, so you can look at previous issues. But it's had a big sort of revamp, so it looks the last two editions are under the new design, which is very exciting. We've talked about higher and degree I think a few times, so it's there if you need it. But yeah, went live, I think, on the 15th? Was that yesterday? So, yes, really, really exciting addition this year and there'll be another one in late January as well, so lots and lots of vacancies to look through.

And I think that might be us done, oh I think I've got one more. If you're a school or college and you're thinking about National Apprenticeship Week planning, we've got some webinars coming up. Monday the 11th of November is the schools and colleges one which is all about how to support you to plan some exciting events to inspire your students and your colleagues and parents and carers in your community to consider apprenticeships and how to do that. So, yes, that is there for you if you would like it. So I think that's it and we are a tiny bit late.

Thank you so much, Eve, for all your invaluable information. If you would like to ask questions that haven't been asked, you can contact us at hello@amazingapprenticeships.com or just visit the website and we will endeavour to answer some of your questions because I hate leaving questions unanswered, especially if they're quite specific ones from different people. So do get in touch if you would like some specific questions answered. Thank you so much for everything. Thank you so much, Eve, again for your time and expertise and we'll see you all next month, hopefully. Thank you so much, everyone. Bye. Thanks, everyone. Bye.