



# Recruitment and Employment Guide

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## Introduction

This guide is intended to provide an overview of considerations for the recruitment and employment of apprentices and upskilling of existing employees through [apprenticeships](#) on behalf of the Advanced Therapies Apprenticeship Community (ATAC) programme, which has been set up to support skills development and secure a talent pipeline in the Advanced Therapies sector through apprenticeships.

Please don't be alarmed by the complexity of the process - the ATAC project team are on hand to support you with all aspects and have templates available to reduce the administration burden for many of the steps, even if you are not joining one of the national cohorts that we have prioritised for the sector! Please contact us at [apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk)

Apprenticeships are a recognised quality and experiential route of learning to enhance career prospects and upskill talent from entry to professional level. Apprenticeships can be used to recruit new starters into your organisations and/or upskill your existing employees. This guide provides an overview and focuses on the key areas of recruiting and starting an apprentice.

[Apprentices](#) are aged 16 or over and combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job. You can [get government funding](#) to cover some or all of the cost of training and assessing an apprentice if you're in England. Your apprentice must:

- work with experienced employees during their apprenticeship
- learn job-specific skills that support the [standard](#) they are working towards
- conduct off the job learning during their working week (in the workplace or at a college/ training organisation) for [20% of their working time](#), for the duration of the apprenticeship

It is important to note that this document does not cover every aspect of apprentice recruitment and employment; this is intended for initial consideration points only; you are responsible for reviewing the Apprenticeship gov.uk webpages and ensuring all apprentice employment and programme rights are in place and supported. Contact your Human Resources team for further advice and guidance, if required. The ATAC project team can however support you in this and have templates available to reduce the administration burden!

It can take on average approximately eight weeks from advert to employing an apprentice – please do consider this and candidate notice periods when you are planning your timescales to recruit.

Information has been used from gov.uk and ACAS to create this guide. For further information on the ATAC programme, apprenticeship programmes and funding available, please visit our dedicated website.

If you have any queries regarding the ATAC programme or this guide, please contact us at [apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk)

## How we can support you

The below diagram provides an overview of how the ATAC project team can support you with apprenticeship recruitment.



## Find a suitable apprenticeship programme and training provider

To be [eligible for funding](#), you will need to have a genuine vacancy that you are recruiting an apprentice into or upskilling an employee through an apprenticeship.

Your apprentice will need to be in a role where they are able to demonstrate skills and experience towards the [apprenticeship standard](#) that they are working towards. For example, a technician working within manufacturing could complete the [Level 3 Science Manufacturing Technician](#) standard. If the employee works in a completely different area, such as Finance, they would not be able to complete this standard. However, they could complete a finance apprenticeship, which is suitable to their job role at their current level or a higher level, where they are able to attain further development in skill and experience.

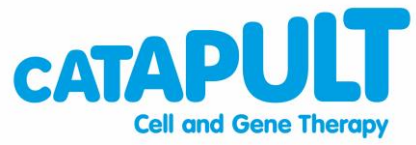
To find a suitable apprenticeship programme, review the standards available on the Institute for Apprenticeships webpage at <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>, searching by occupation. The ATAC programme project team can also support you with this - we have prioritised six programmes suitable for the ATMP sector, based on industry consultation; please visit the ATAC programme website for further information on these and when cohorts will be starting. If your programme isn't one of those listed, please get in touch and we can explore further - [apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk).

Once you have identified a suitable apprenticeship programme, you will need to find a training provider that will suit your delivery needs. We can support with this, but you can source your own training provider by following the below steps:

1. Use the Find Apprenticeship Training portal at <https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk/>
2. Filter by level and programme
3. Decide if you wish to have local or national delivery
4. We recommend that you review the training providers' [Ofsted](#) rating to establish what rating they hold
5. Check what [funding](#) is available
6. Contact the training provider to have your queries answered and negotiate the cost (within [funding band](#))
7. Select your [End-Point Assessment Organisation](#) and the cost of this
8. Set up your apprenticeship [digital account](#) to pay for your apprenticeship

You are encouraged to agree an apprenticeship service agreement and KPI's with your chosen training provider, detailing what they will deliver, at what cost (within the funding bands), timescales, support that they will provide and ensuring they are fully responsible for the quality aspects of the programme.

End-Point Assessment (EPA) Organisations deliver the EPA at the end of the apprenticeship programme – this is your choice; however, the training provider can support you with this. Agree the cost in advance of the programme starting. It is estimated that this may be approximately 20% of the cost of the programme. Create a 'letter of intent' with your training provider to agree this. Your funds for this will go directly from your digital account to the training provider, who will then pay the EPA Organisation when ready to start this process (at the end of the programme).



The ATAC project team can support you with this, if you have any queries; please contact us at [apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk).

## Advertising your vacancy (new starter)

Follow your normal in-house approval processes to identify and authorise a genuine vacancy, where the apprentice will attain the learning required to complete the apprenticeship standard. The apprentice's salary will need to be paid by the employer, however the Apprenticeship Levy or co-investment will cover the training and assessment of the apprenticeship programme.

When creating your advert for the position (we can provide templates), you will need the following information:

- Overview of you as an employer - why would an apprentice want to work for you? Make sure you promote this!
- Weekly wage - **you must pay your apprentice at least [the minimum wage](#)**
- Weekly hours – we would suggest that the apprenticeship is full time or at least 30 hours per week. The programme and contract would need to be extended to reflect part time duration if less than 30 hours.
- Skills and experience the apprentice would attain – why should they want to complete the apprenticeship?
- Essential and desirable entry requirements (recruitment profile and/or job description) – the [ACAS](#) website can support you with what to consider for this.
- Recruitment timeline – dates when you intend to hold interviews and advise of outcomes (if known)
- Training provider – who they will be completing their training with
- Contact details – candidates may wish to contact you to ask any queries about your advert. Consider who you want queries to go to; yourself or your training provider?

Not all apprentices know how to write a good CV – this might be their first ever job. Have you thought about providing some CV guidance in your advert? A link to the National Careers Service might help at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job/cv-sections>

Once you have agreed your vacancy and advert, place this on your company webpage and advertise through your normal methods for a minimum of two weeks. Send your advert detail via e-mail to your training provider as soon as you're ready for this to be published (you should have a direct contact after you have selected them in the previous section).

Vacancies will be posted on National Apprenticeship Service by your training provider (via the “recruit an apprentice” portal). This is a primary tool used by future apprentices and training providers and links are provided to employers to circulate to their networks. They can also support in placing your advert on other free recruitment webpages, such as Indeed, social media and/or local schools and colleges. If you recruit through an application process instead of accepting CVs, discuss this with your training provider beforehand so this can be captured in the advert and application top tips could be incorporated to support your candidates.

The ATAC project team have conducted apprentice salary benchmarking and have template recruitment profiles available should you need any support with this. Please contact us at [apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk) for further information.

## Shortlisting

Your training provider may offer a support service of conducting initial shortlisting for your vacancy. Training providers identified by ATAC project team do offer this. If you are selecting your own training provider, you are encouraged to explore this with them before selecting them to deliver your apprenticeship.

The purpose of shortlisting is to identify candidates who best meet the selection criteria for the post (i.e. against the recruitment profile, job description and/or person specification); who are most likely to be able to carry out the duties of the job; and who you wish to find out more about during a formal interview.

You must not discriminate on grounds of sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion throughout the entire recruitment process - going through job applications, selecting candidates for interview, offering a candidate the job, and agreeing their terms and conditions - and, of course, once you've employed them. For example, if a job candidate you have selected for interview has said they have a disability, you must consider any reasonable adjustments, so they are not at a disadvantage. Check that the candidate has the correct UK visa to be able to access funding (i.e. they have an appropriate work or residency visa and not on an education only visa) and have been living within the UK for 3 years at the point of enrolling onto the programme.

Conduct your shortlisting and sift the candidates who best match recruitment profile and/or job description and person specification. Ideally, this should be done by two or more people to avoid unintended bias. If you have any queries during your shortlisting, such as does the candidate hold the correct qualifications or do their qualifications make them ineligible for funding, please raise these with your training provider or ATAC project team, who will be able to guide you (if your training provider isn't conducting the shortlisting for you).

Once you have conducted your shortlisting, contact your successful candidates to invite them to interview – you can do this directly or establish if your training provider can do this on your behalf. It's recommended that you give your candidates at least one week's notice, with the following:

- Date, time and location of the interview
- What to expect on the day – will it include an interview and assessment, who will be on the interview panel etc.
- Is there anything to complete beforehand – such as functional skills assessment through your training provider (ask your training provider to find out when this will be completed; this is initial Maths and English assessments)
- What they need to bring – ID and copies of certificates
- Where to report to and who to ask for – including directions to your location
- Who to contact should they have any queries or need to request any reasonable adjustments

It is suggested that you print or save your shortlisted applications and/or CV's from the national apprenticeship service portal, as you may not have access after the advert closes.



## Preparing and conducting interviews (new starter)

Interviews should, where possible, be conducted by more than one person, to avoid unintended bias.

Before the interview, make a list of the questions you want to ask. Keep all notes, including any made during the interview. They will help you to sift the applicants fairly.

It is advisable to have set questions for all of your candidates to probe their skills, and help you measure their answers. When carrying out interviews, you should make sure that you:

- are not interrupted by visitors or telephone calls – book a private room
- ask 'open ended' questions that cannot be answered by a 'yes' or a 'no'
- do not ask questions which may be considered discriminatory
- be prepared to give reasons for rejection to unsuccessful candidates who ask

Some examples of 'open ended' questions for your interviews are:

- Provide us with an example of an achievement that you are proud of
- Please provide an example of how you worked in a team to achieve a goal / objective
- Tell me how you have worked effectively under pressure
- Why do you think an apprenticeship would suit you?

The following is a recommended structure for your interviews:

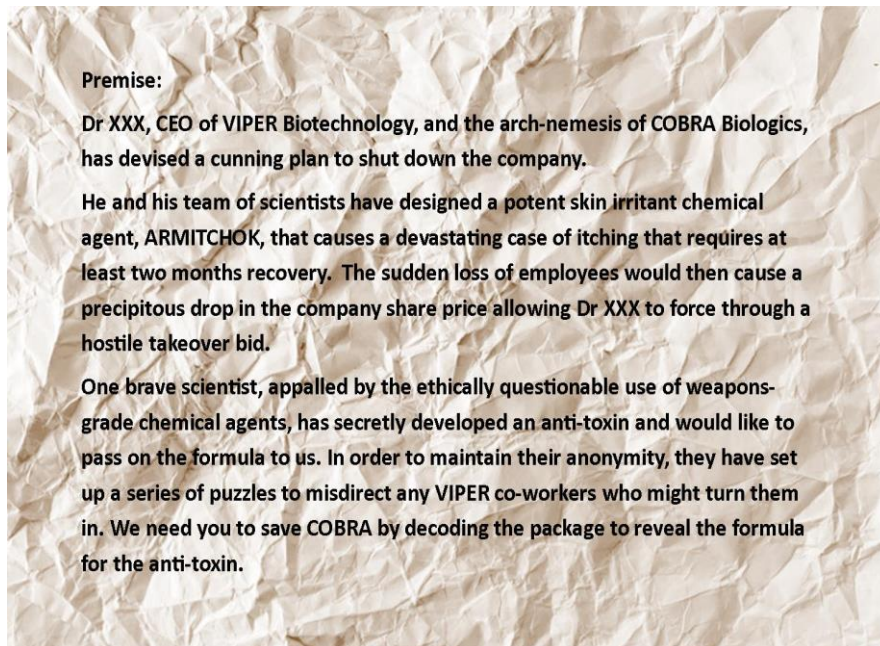
- Give the candidate an introduction to those on the interview panel (name, job title)
- Ensure that the candidate has a glass of water (they may be nervous)
- Provide a brief overview of the role, i.e. job title, base, working hours, salary
- Briefly explain the apprenticeship programme, i.e. programme/level, training provider, travel involved (if any), study and support time
- Explain that the interview panel will be taking notes – this is normal procedure
- Ensure that the candidate has no questions before starting
- Ask open-ended and probing questions – ask all of your candidates the same questions to ensure that the process is fair and consistent. This will assist you with your scoring.
- Take copies of ID and certificates – training provider will need these for the successful candidate
- Confirm candidate contact details – to advise of outcome of the interview
- Allow time to answer any questions at the end – prepare to answer questions on when outcomes will be notified

You may wish to consider an assessment as part of your interview and selection process. The next section of this guide will provide you with an example of an assessment that has been used for a Level 5 apprentice selection process.

## Assessment days (new starter)

You may wish to consider an assessment as part of your selection process. This could be assessing Maths and English, following instructions or attention to detail. Cobra Biologics have a best practice example of using an ‘escape room’ activity for their assessment. The below provides an overview of this:

Provide an introductory slide to outline the scenario and give a general hint as to the end goal (below):



Participants are split into two teams and given a padlocked bag and the first puzzle.

Puzzle 1 – a jigsaw-like puzzle which reveals a code to the padlocked bag containing the next puzzle.

Puzzle 2 – an envelope containing a decoder table, and a set of prop cans with false labels as clues that must be decoded using the table. This gives a phrase that tells the location of the third puzzle.

Puzzle 3 – an envelope hidden in the room which contains a map with highlighted locations, a postcard with selectively capitalised words, and a phone with a 7–digit unlock code corresponding to the co-ordinates of one of the map locations.

When the phone is unlocked the “escape” is completed.

This ‘escape room’ is assessing team working, following instructions, attention to detail, problem solving and analytical skills. Plus, it’s fun for the candidates! If you would like to discuss alternative assessment activities for your selection process, please contact us at [apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk).

## Offer of employment (new starter)

Once you have completed your selection process, you are able to offer the position to your successful candidate subject to satisfactory pre-employment clearances (conditional offer), as follows:

- Employment or personal employment reference – we would suggest obtaining two references
- Obtain copies of relevant qualifications, such as Maths and English GCSE's or functional skills, A Levels, Degree etc. (if not already provided as part of the interview)
- Review and take copies of relevant ID documentation (if not already provided as part of the interview)
- Occupational Health or Health Screening (if applicable)
- DBS check (if applicable)

You will employ your apprentice using your normal recruitment processes, either on a fixed term contract for the duration of the apprenticeship programme or permanent employment. You may want to build in a probation period.

After satisfactory pre-employment clearances have been returned, you can contact your apprentice and the offer can be formalised. Agree a start date with your apprentice and send the following details onto your training provider (once you have obtained your apprentice's consent to do so):

- Apprentice Name
- Base location
- Start date
- Copies of certificates and ID
- Agree an induction and enrolment date with the provider

You will now need to issue your apprentice with an Apprenticeship Service Agreement, which details their apprenticeship programme and duration, commitment, terms of conditions and entitlements. Your Human Resource function will be able to support you with this.

Your apprentice's salary should be paid as advertised and may want to be reviewed after year one to align with your company's internal policy. This is not funded by the levy; this will be funded from your own budget.

Consideration should be taken on the age of the apprentice entering the business, and practices may need to be adapted to support younger workers (16 to 18 year olds), if applicable. Ensure you comply with younger worker rights before they start employment with you (see [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) for further information).

## Employment (new starter)

Apprentices should be onboarded using your normal processes, following the same induction, probation and training. This includes mandatory training, health and safety requirements, appraisals and performance reviews. The next section of this guide provides an overview of considerations for your apprentice's induction.

We would encourage you to plan how you are going to support the 20% [off the job](#) training (which is paid time) and agree this with your apprentice in advance, for example, are you supporting a set day each week or spreading the 20% over multiple days.

Apprentices should be allocated a direct supervisor in the work place for day to day interactions and you may want to consider other support in the network such as a buddy or mentor. Set clear expectations with regards to performance, behaviour and reward.

Travel and expenses should be paid in line with internal policies. This is not funded by the levy; this will be funded from your own budget.

Apprentices should be able to access all the same rewards, benefits, conditions, employment rights and entitlements as everyone else, such as paid holidays, sick pay, benefits, support, pension, HR policies etc.

## Induction and probation (new starter)

We recommend that an [induction](#) plan is created to outline the key activities and training for your apprentices during their initial starting period in the role. You may already have policies in place to support this. Your plan should cover the following as a minimum:

On their first day:

- Point of contact – manager and a ‘buddy’ within the team.
- Complete any important paperwork – bank details, security access, P45, car parking, uniform etc.
- Plan for the apprentice to gain an understanding of the organisation, your department and how everything works. They could have a tour of site, shadow other job roles as part of their induction and/or attend any site meetings to observe.
- Health, safety and well-being induction – what do they need to do in an emergency.
- Arrange for them to be set up on your systems and have relevant access to enable them to quickly start their role and apprenticeship programme.

Within their first week:

- Arrange regular one to one meetings to ensure they are enjoying their role, progressing with their apprenticeship and feel supported. We would suggest weekly one to one meetings during the first month and then fortnightly thereafter during their probationary period.
- Arrange for your training provider to hold their initial induction and enrolment onto programme. This meeting will involve arranging an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) so you and your apprentice are aware of the programme and activities for completion.
- Ensure that you agree how you support the [20% off the job](#) learning in advance and pre-plan this into diaries. Agree this with the training provider at the initial meeting (see below).
- Ensure that you follow your probation and induction policy (if you have one in place) and your apprentice is aware of expectations regarding this.
- Let your apprentice know standards and expected behaviours and where to find Human Resource policies.

Within their first month:

- Conduct a welcome day (supports the previous points).
- Hold regular one to one meetings to ensure they are enjoying their role, progressing with their apprenticeship and feel supported.
- Consider other developmental programmes offered internally.

- Hold a probationary review meeting – discuss performance, behaviours, support/development and their work towards their apprenticeship.
- Explore any additional support or development that the apprentice may need.

## Upskilling existing employees

Apprenticeships are a fantastic way to upskill your existing employees and support your talent pipeline development. Your existing employee will need to be in a role where they are able to demonstrate skills and experience towards the [apprenticeship standard](#) that they are interested in working towards.

They will remain on their current salary and terms and conditions when completing the apprenticeship, however, would need to have a signed commitment statement and apprenticeship service agreement in place.

If you have a cohort of apprentices that you wish to upskill through one apprenticeship programme, the training provider may be able to attend your workplace to hold an 'engagement' or 'information' day. The purpose of this will be for the training provider to promote the apprenticeship programme(s), explain expectations and commitment, support available and to establish levels of interest prior to formal enrolments occurring. We would encourage you to provide as much information as possible for those who are interested in an apprenticeship, to ensure they know what to expect prior to formally starting. This will assist in minimising withdrawals from programmes later.

Your training provider can also provide advice and guidance on suitable apprenticeship programmes. For example, if you provide them with a job description, they can advise which programmes would be suitable for the post holder. The ATAC project team can also support you with this - please contact us at [apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk).

Once you are happy that the apprenticeship programme suits the need of the role identified, contact your training provider directly and formally enrol on the programme. Please check beforehand if this has been identified by the ATAC project as a national programme, then you can enjoy the added benefit of extra ATMP specific activity and being part of a national networked cohort – please see the website for further information on these.

Training providers aim to contact you and arrange an initial meeting within four weeks. You and your apprentice (existing employee) must attend this meeting. This is where the formal enrolment will occur, the programme will be discussed, and an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) and review meetings agreed.

Agree how you are able to support the [20% off the job](#) learning in advance and pre-plan this into diaries, i.e. can you agree a set day each week or spread the 20% over multiple days.

The next section of this guide will focus on the key consideration points for the training and assessment of the apprenticeship programme.

## Training and assessment (new starter and existing employees)

This section provides an overview of the key points for you to think about in relation to the training and assessment of the apprenticeship, for new starters joining your organisation as an apprentice and for upskilling existing employees.

- Agree a contract, SLA and KPIs with your training provider to ensure all parties are clear on service delivery, performance and expectations.
- Pay for the apprenticeship through the digital apprenticeship service account (levy or co-investment).
- You must sign an [apprenticeship agreement](#) with your apprentice at the start of the apprenticeship. This gives details of what you agree to do for the apprentice, including how long you'll employ them for, the training you'll give them, their working conditions and the qualifications they are working towards.
- You must also sign a commitment statement with your apprentice and the training provider. The training provider will normally have a template to use for this. It must include the planned content and schedule for training, what is expected and offered by the employer, the training organisation and the apprentice and how to resolve queries or complaints.
- Obtain a copy of your apprentices Commitment Statement, Apprenticeship Agreement and Individual Learning Plan upon enrolment from your training provider.
- Arrange regular informal one to one meetings with your apprentice for the duration of their apprenticeship.
- Plan when review meetings with your training provider and apprentice will take place to 'check in' on progress and if any support is needed.
- Agree how you are able to support the [20% off the job](#) learning in advance and pre-plan this into diaries, i.e. can you agree a set day each week or spread the 20% over multiple days.
- The training provider will arrange to regularly meet with the apprentice informally (on a one to one basis) for the duration of the programme. These meetings might be held face to face (at your apprentice's base), over the telephone or via Skype; ensure these are pre-planned and counted towards the apprentice's 20% off the job training.
- Ensure your apprentice and you have access to the e-Portfolio system to access resources, upload and access documents and track progress.
- The training provider will arrange formal review meetings on a regular basis. You will be required to attend these meetings to obtain direct feedback from the training provider on progress and any support requirements. You will also need to liaise with the training provider throughout to ensure that the apprentice's work/tasks meet the requirements (evidence) for their workplace units, hence the importance of you attending these formal review meetings.
- You should select the end-point assessment provider, details are available on the Digital Apprenticeship Service RoAAO (register of apprenticeship assessment organisations).



- Registration for the end-point assessment service needs to also occur at the beginning of the apprentice's training so the apprentice and employer have the right materials to monitor and sign off competencies and behaviours – the training provider will arrange this.
- You are encouraged to hold regular one to one meetings with your apprentice throughout their programme, to ensure they are progressing well and are supported throughout. If you have any queries or require any support, the training provider is your first point of contact.

## Useful resources and contacts

Topic	Contact / Link
ACAS	<a href="http://www.acas.org.uk">www.acas.org.uk</a>
Apprenticeship Agreement Templates	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-agreement-template">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-agreement-template</a>
Apprenticeship Employer Helpline	Email: <a href="mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk">nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk</a> Telephone: 0800 0150 600
Apprenticeship Guidance	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships">https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships</a>
Apprenticeship Levy	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work#non-levy-paying-employers">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work#non-levy-paying-employers</a>
Create an Apprenticeship Service Account	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds</a>
CV Support	<a href="https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job/cv-sections">https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/get-a-job/cv-sections</a>
Employing an Apprentice	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice">https://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice</a>
Find an Apprenticeship Training Provider	<a href="https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk">https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk</a>
Funding Bands	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands</a>
Funding Rules	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2017-to-2018">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2017-to-2018</a>
Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) – to search apprenticeship programmes	<a href="https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/">https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/</a>
Off the Job Training	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-off-the-job-training">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-off-the-job-training</a>
Recruiting an Apprentice	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/recruit-apprentice">https://www.gov.uk/recruit-apprentice</a>
Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations">https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations</a>

The ATAC project team can support you with apprenticeships and have templates available to reduce the administration burden! Please contact us at [apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk](mailto:apprenticeshipsinfo@ct.catapult.org.uk)

Access our useful guide for apprentice recruitment and employment and our manager’s checklist to assist you in supporting an apprentice; this can be found on our ATAC programme website.