

Employment & Skills Toolkit

This toolkit has been produced to help employers and business advisers in the South East Midlands to identify support and pathways and engage with providers to assist with employing people, filling vacancies, upskilling and reskilling employees and developing a talent pipeline for the future.



A range of government programmes, are available for employers who are considering hiring employees, offering work experience or upskilling existing staff, some of which offer financial incentives. Find out more at gov.uk/skills-support.

All these programmes are included within this toolkit together with other support for employers and local contact information. Press Ctrl on the titles to move to the relevant information.

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Job Centre Plus

Jobcentre Plus (JCP) was an agency of the Department for Work and Pensions and provides services primarily to those attempting to find employment and employers to link to people seeking work.

Jobcentre Plus has a range of recruitment services that can help employers:

- [Recruitment advice](#), including support with vacancies.
- [Work trials](#) to give the opportunity to try out potential recruits.
- Advice about offering [Work experience and apprenticeships](#), including using the sector-based work academy programme.
- Support if [employing someone with a disability](#) (Access to Work).
- Advice and guidance on [employing someone with a disability or health condition](#).

Employers can also advertise a job with the [‘Find a job’ service](#).

You can contact the Employer Services Line using the [online enquiry form](#) or by phone.

Employer Services Line

- Telephone: 0800 169 0178
- Textphone: 0800 169 0172

Local Offices:

Bedfordshire

- Bedford, 57 Bromham Road, Bedford, MK40 2EH
- Biggleswade, 73 High Street, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire, SG18 0JH
- Leighton Buzzard, Bossard House, West Street, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 1DA

Luton

- Cheviot House, Guildford Street, Luton, LU1 2ER

Milton Keynes

- Southgate House, 449-499 Midsummer Blvd, Milton Keynes, MK9 3BN

Northamptonshire

- Corby, Thoroughsale House, George Street, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN17 1PH
- Daventry, Civic Offices, Lodge Road, Daventry, Northamptonshire, NN11 4FP
- Kettering, Derbyshire House, Lower Street, Kettering, Northamptonshire, NN16 8BG
- Rushden, 71 Rectory Road, Rushden, Northamptonshire, NN10 0AF
- Northampton, Frances House, 21 Lower Mounts, Northampton, NN1 3LY
- Wellingborough, Lothersdale House, West Villa Road, Wellingborough, NN8 4NE

Further Education Colleges

Opportunities for employers to engage with the local colleges to access the talent pipeline through engagement with work placements, apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational courses, higher education, professional certificates as well as helping develop employability skills and community training.

- [Barnfield College \(Luton\)](#)
- [Bedford College \(Bedford and Shuttleworth\)](#)
- [Central Bedfordshire College \(Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard\)](#)
- [Milton Keynes College \(Milton Keynes\)](#)
- [Moulton College \(Northampton and Rushden\)](#)
- [Northampton College \(Northampton and Daventry\)](#)
- [Tresham College \(Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough\)](#)
- [National College for Motorsport \(Silverstone\)](#)

Institute of Technology

Institutes of Technology (IoT) are education providers working at the forefront of higher technical education to offer learners and employers state-of-the-art facilities and equipment.

The South Central IoT based in Bletchley focuses on digital technologies led by Milton Keynes College, working with a consortium of world-leading brands including Microsoft, KPMG, Activate Learning, and Cranfield University.

The IoT provides higher level technical qualifications, apprenticeships and short courses for a new generation of digital visionaries.

- [South Central Institute of Technology](#)

Higher Education - Universities

A diverse range of courses and qualifications at higher levels including degrees, Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), foundation degrees and masters providing opportunities to work with students through internships, developing talented people into your business.

- [University of Bedfordshire](#)
- [University of Northampton](#)
- [MK:U](#)
- [Cranfield University](#)
- [The Open University](#) - The OU offers ways to engage with employers to understand their business challenges and provide staff development solutions including apprenticeships. For recruitment, they offer channels to access OU students.

Sector-based work academy programme (SWAP)

SWAP can be tailored to meet recruitment needs, including pre-employment training, a work experience placement, with a guarantee of a job interview for participants. They run for up to 6 weeks, with a work experience placement usually at the business and with pre-employment training off site or online.

Potential benefits to a business:

- Recruitment of staff with the right training and skills from the outset, developed through fully funded pre-employment training.
- Reduces the risks within the overall process of recruiting new employees.
- Opportunity to work with like-minded businesses to contribute to wider priorities around diversity and inclusion, or social mobility, in an organisation.
- Work experience placements allow developmental opportunities for existing employees such as mentoring, supervisory and coaching skills.
- This is Government-funded tailored support with no direct cost to the employer.

Contact:

- Can be accessed via local Job Centre Plus
- Employer Services Line on 0800 169 0178

More information <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/sector-based-work-academy-programme-swap>.

The Work and Health Programme

Through this website, you can access people who have experienced barriers to work and are immediately available. Once you have shared information about the vacancies you have, the WHP team will understand your business needs and identify candidates.

The jobs you share can be from anything from entry level to managerial and be any meaningful work.

People eligible to the WHP include:

- disabled
- out of work
- a carer or former carer
- a homeless person
- a former member of His Majesty's (HM) armed forces
- a member of the HM armed forces reserves
- the partner of a current or former member of HM armed forces
- a care leaver
- a young person in a gang or at risk of being involved with a gang
- a refugee
- a victim of domestic violence
- dependent (or have been dependent) on drugs or alcohol and preventing them from getting work
- an ex-offender who has completed a custodial or community sentence
- an offender serving a community sentence

In addition to identifying jobseekers with suitable skills for your roles, the WHP also provides support to prepare them to begin working for you.

This service is completely free and delivered by the Prime Provider Partnership.

More information at <https://www.whprecruit.co.uk/>.

Restart

Provides Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work from 9 months enhanced support to find jobs.

The Restart Scheme breaks down employment barriers that could be holding people back from finding work. Our local prime provider, Jobs 22 Limited, will work with employers, local government and other delivery partners to deliver tailored support for individuals.

Referrals will be made over a 3-year period from June 2021 and the Restart Scheme will benefit more than 1 million Universal Credit claimants who are expected to look for and be available for work but have no sustained earnings. The scheme will provide up to 12 months of tailored support for each participant.

How the programme works is explained at <https://jobs-22.co.uk/restart-scheme>.

Potential benefits to your business:

- By engaging with Jobs 22 and their partners, you can develop a pipeline of potential employees, keen to start to work.
- There are no costs for the employer.

Contacts via the website at <https://jobs-22.co.uk/startyourjourney>

Skills Support for the Workforce

The Skills Support for the Workforce programme (SSW) helps support small and medium businesses in South East Midlands to upskill their employees with training courses & qualifications to help business growth.

The provider, Serco, can work with employers to develop a bespoke training programme relevant to their business needs, and as the SSW programme is co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), a wide range of training can be accessed at no cost to your business, subject to eligibility.

The programme has a network of training providers who can deliver fully funded and accredited training courses covering a range of subjects such as: IT & Digital Skills, Leadership and Management, Engineering, Manufacturing, Construction, Health and Social care, Customer Service, Business Administration, and many more.

More information at [Skills Support for the Workforce](#)

Contact: Matt.clark@serco.com, T: 07738 897161

Find a Job Website

Employers can advertise jobs for free at the 'Find a Job' website at www.gov.uk/advertise-job.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are jobs which combine practical on-the-job skills training with sustained off-the-job learning, available from entry level to master's degree-equivalent. Employees get training in the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are relevant to their job and they need to be paid a salary.

Apprentices spend 80% of their time in the workplace and 20% undertaking off-the-job training in a setting that suits the needs of the business – this could be a college, a training provider or at an Institute of Technology (IoT). Training can also be delivered at your place of business.

Information at <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/#>

SEMLEP - A quick guide to apprenticeships for business

https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file_name=881

Potential benefits to a business:

- A majority of apprentices stay with their employer when they finish their apprenticeship. This can make a sustainable investment in the skills to support your business.
- Improve productivity; apprentices are motivated to learn new skills.
- Productive and effective way to grow talent.
- Opportunity to capitalise on new ideas and a fresh perspective.

Financial incentives available:

- There are payments to support specific groups of apprentices such as 16 to 18-year-olds, those with disabilities, or young people leaving care.
- Employers must have an apprenticeship [service account](#) to apply for incentive payments.
- More information [here](#).

Employer costs:

- Apprentice National Minimum Wage, though many employers choose to pay more than this to reflect the labour market.
- May have to contribute 5% of the apprentice's training and assessment costs – depending on the size of business and the age of your apprentice. The training provider will be able to advise you on this.

Traineeships

Aimed to prepare a young person aged 16-24 (25 with an EHCP) for specific apprenticeship or employment roles in a business, a traineeship is a skills development programme that includes a work placement. The full programme can last from 6 weeks up to 1 year, though most traineeships last for less than 6 months.

The business needs to be able to offer at least 70 hours of a safe, meaningful, and high-quality work experience.

The trainee will gain English, maths, digital and work-related qualifications which can lead them on to an apprenticeship, work or further education.

Potential benefits to a business:

- Allows an employer to design a programme that suits both the needs of the business and the needs of the trainee.
- Can help you develop a loyal and talented workforce.
- Allows the support of young people into meaningful work.

Employer cost:

- No cost (it is optional whether the employer chooses to pay the young person a wage and/or payment for expenses such as travel and subsistence).

Information at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/traineeship-information-for-employers> and case studies <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/how-employers-are-benefitting-from-traineeships>

Provider lists at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traineeship-providers>

Note: From 1 August 2023, there will no longer be a national traineeships programme.

Free level 3 qualifications for eligible adults

Part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, any adult aged 19 and over who is looking to achieve their first full level 3 qualification, can access a fully funded course. A full level 3 qualification is equivalent to an advanced technical certificate or diploma, or A levels.

The course list has been selected with input from employers as well as the FE sector. The list includes courses that can apply to and support the local labour market such as digital skills, accountancy and business skills.

Potential benefits to your business

- Help develop a loyal and talented workforce with the skills needed (94% of employees would stay at their company longer if it invested in their career – LinkedIn Workplace Learning report 2019).
- Help futureproof a business in a rapidly changing labour market.
- Improve productivity; learners are motivated to learn new skills, provide new ideas and a fresh perspective.
- Support staff to upskill or reskill into a higher-level role in your business, without funding the training.

Employer costs

- The courses are fully funded for eligible adults. Employees may need time to study and attend classes depending on their working hours and status and the flexibility of the course.

Find a free level 3 qualification at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/free-courses-and-additional-training-for-your-employees> or contact local [Further Education Colleges](#).

T-Levels

T Levels are a new, 2-year qualification for 16- to 19-year-olds. Designed with employers, each T Level is equivalent to 3 A levels and helps young people develop the knowledge, attitude and practical skills to thrive in the workplace.

At the heart of each course is a 20% meaningful industry placement, that will give you early access to the brightest talent entering your market.

Potential benefits to a business:

- Use industry placements as an extended interview for entry-levels and help develop core competencies, attitudes, behaviours, technical and practical skills.
- Reduce many of the costs associated with recruitment by working with local colleges to connect with young people who are deciding on their careers.

More information and to register go to <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/employers>.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are an addition to technical training routes, alongside apprenticeships, and degrees.

They are new and existing Level 4 and 5 qualifications (such as Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, Diploma Higher Education) approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, against employer-led occupational standards

The first digital HTQs were launched September 2022, leading to higher-level occupations in digital.

Health and Science and Construction HTQs will be available for teaching from 2023 alongside further qualifications in the digital sector, with a full roll-out of 15 occupational sectors by 2025.

More information at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/higher-technical-qualifications>.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of up to 16 weeks for aged 19 or over and who are either in work, self-employed, recently unemployed or returning to work after a break.

Devised to build up valuable sector-specific skills based on local employer demand including digital, construction and logistics and are a direct path to a job on completion.

Employers who want to use Skills Bootcamps for their existing employees contribute 30% of the cost if they are a large employer, or 10% if they are a small to medium employer (SME).

Benefits include:

- Develop a talented workforce with the skills you need quickly
- Can futureproof your business in a rapidly changing labour market

- Recruit staff with the right training and skills from the outset
- Access to a pipeline of skilled adults by working with existing Skills Bootcamp providers

More information at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/skills-bootcamps>.

Bootcamp training providers can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-bootcamps-training-providers>.

Multiply

Multiply helps employees build confidence with numbers for life and work. It is available to anyone aged 19+ without a Level 2 (GCSE/O-Level) qualification (or equivalent) in Maths.

The programme includes a wide variety of offers, initiatives and courses from drop in sessions, to short term intensive courses to full length qualifications.

Details and local providers are at <https://skillsforlife.campaign.gov.uk/courses/multiply/>.

All courses are fully funded and flexible to limit pressures on existing commitments.

Improving employee's numeracy skills can help improve the quality of the workforce and encourage better productivity.

Multiply also helps with:

- Support for new recruits lacking confidence with numbers
- Building employee and employer confidence with numbers in life and work
- Motivating employees to pursue different forms of training in the workplace
- Supporting employees to progress within your organisation

Supported Internships

An unpaid 6 to 12-month work placement for 16 to 24-year-olds with additional needs, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), supported by a qualified job coach.

Supported interns are enrolled with and supported by a learning provider, but spend most of their learning time - typically around 70% in the workplace.

Benefits include:

- Creation of a diverse workforce.
- Provision of a job coach who will support the intern and increase your confidence of employing individuals with additional needs.
- Allows you to shape a job role that suits both the needs of your business and the needs of the supported intern.

More information at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/supported-internships>.

Recruiting Ex-Services Personnel

The Ministry of Defence's Career Transition Partnership (CTP) connects experienced, trained and skilled ex-service people with employers. The CTP provide a personalised service to employers, regardless of size.

This relationship recognises and builds on the talent that ex-service personnel have to offer the labour market and employers demand for high quality employees.

More information at [Career Transition Partnership](#).

Businesses of all sizes who wish to support the armed forces community can sign the [Armed Forces/Military Covenant](#). Employers make their own promises on how you will demonstrate their support.

Care-Leaver Covenant

The Care-leaver Covenant is a way employers can support 16 to 25-year-olds leaving care to become independent.

Organisations can pledge support including apprenticeships, work experience or free or discounted goods or services.

This support can create and support a diverse and loyal workforce for your business.

More information at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/care-leaver-covenant>.

Employing Prisoners and Prison Leavers

New Futures Network (NFN) arranges partnerships between prisons and employers.

This is a free government scheme, but you may have your own business costs. If you recruit someone you must pay the minimum wage.

Of those surveyed, more than 80% of employers positively rated those they employed as reliable and hard-working.

More information at <https://find-employer-schemes.education.gov.uk/schemes/employing-prisoners-and-prison-leavers>.

SEMLEP SEND Community of Practice

Aimed at supporting engagement between Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) schools and Employers, together with Track NN we have produced a range of resources to encourage engagement between Employers and Education, with a focus on SEND.

The website provides a variety of resources, and links to support which can help employers create opportunities for individuals that evidence shows are reliable, hardworking and loyal.

[SEND Community of Practice - Employers](#)

Contact to help guide is Tom Cliffe, thomas@track.org.uk.

Part of the resources include the MENCAP Traineeships <https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/employment/traineeships>.

Ambitious about Autism have a collection of toolkits to help employers to develop their awareness and understanding of autism. They will support the hiring and retaining of talented autistic young people. <https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/what-we-do/employment/toolkits>

Growing Talent – Careers Hub, School and College Employer Engagement

Our Skills Strategy aims to ensure we have a talent pipeline that ensures all young people understand what career opportunities exist, develop core competencies, attitudes and behaviours and engage with relevant pathways aligned to the needs of employers.

Evidence also shows that employer engagement with young people makes a real impact. Young people who receive four or more employer encounters whilst at school and college are significantly less likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Our Careers Hub presents employers with opportunities to help develop the talent pipeline:

- Enterprise Adviser - Enterprise Advisers partner with a school or college over a period of at least one year, offering strategic support on their careers programme development and review. This role is a mixture of consultant, critical friend and coach. It's a great opportunity to make a real and sustained impact on the young people in the school and in your business.
- Give An Hour - Give an Hour offers you the chance to engage with young people, on an adhoc basis, and share your knowledge, insights and experience. Activities can range from careers talks or mock interviews, careers fairs and industry insight days, work experience to promoting STEM. Your skills and knowledge will make a difference.
- Cornerstone employer - Cornerstone employers provide the Careers Hub with a vital link to business and our local key sectors. They are the Careers Hub's flagship group of local employers, who are ambassadors for driving better outcomes for young people by embedding careers education in their own organisations.
- Teacher Encounters - Offers you the chance to connect with teachers through webinars, networking sessions and workplace visits. Teachers are key influencers in the career and study options for young people. Teacher Encounters enables employers to support and inform teachers and, in turn, young people.

Benefits include:

- Raising the profile of the employer
- Opportunity to recruit young people and/or identifying potential talented people early
- CPD and motivation for team(s) within a business
- Contribution to CSR by giving back to your local community

Review the conduits available at <https://www.semlep.com/careers-hub-get-involved/>.

