



Apprenticeships: the pathway to sustainable futures, for everyone.

This year's National Apprenticeship Week is already upon us, running from 7th February to 13th February. With skill shortages reaching acute levels in many sectors, the UK Government committed to levelling up in the talent economy - and Welsh Government dedicated to creating 125,000 all-age apprenticeships in the next five years - this showcasing of workplace skills and vocational development will be celebrated for what it really is: a critical foundation stone for the sustainable success of all employers; and a major opportunity to fulfil life's potential for people in every working age demographic, across CCR and Wales as a whole.

An inclusive pathway for 1,500+ roles in many different sectors

Every employer, sector, industry, careers advisory service, educational establishment and candidate community needs to embrace Apprenticeships - now more than ever. The good news is that this shift in mindset is already happening. Here in Wales, there are apprenticeships available for over 1,500 job roles - offering the very best earn-as-you-learn career opportunities in anything from engineering and data analysis to bricklaying and boat building.

These wide-ranging Apprenticeships are offered in many different organisations - from major institutions like the British Army and NHS, to large companies such as Openreach and PwC, through to an incredible variety of small and medium-sized enterprises, across all our industries.

The whole vision is to make Apprenticeships as successful and rewarding as possible for both employers and employees - and that starts by ensuring that Apprenticeships are open to anyone aged 16 or over (there isn't any upper age limit), with four different types or levels available:

- Foundation Apprenticeships (Level 2)
- Apprenticeships (Level 3)
- Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4 and 5)
- Degree Apprenticeships (Level 6 and 7)

Entry requirements geared to get everyone into an Apprenticeship

An Apprenticeship is a chance for everyone to show what they are capable of, while developing self-belief and increasing their skill set. People can start their Apprenticeship at a number of levels, depending on the qualifications they have (formal qualifications are not needed for certain levels), the job they are applying for and the apprenticeship standard the employer wants to use.

For the Foundation Level 2, applicants need to be able to show that they can complete the programme. For Level 3, some industries ask for 3 GCSEs, while other employers don't specify the need for any qualifications. For the Higher Levels (4 and 5), there may be a requirement for at least five GCSEs, or qualifications such as 'A' levels, NVQ/SVQ Level 3 or a BTEC National - while a minimum of 'A' level standard qualifications is usually requested for Degree Apprenticeships.

Whatever the level, an apprenticeship can be just the start of a journey that grows with the confidence and development of the person. For example, anyone beginning their Apprenticeship journey at an intermediate or advanced level can work their way up through the higher-level apprenticeships to achieve a Master's degree in a choice of career areas.

Why choose an Apprenticeship?

An Apprenticeship is designed to enhance a person's level of competency and confidence, enabling individuals to upskill within a role by developing practical skills and knowledge. That's why many people view Apprenticeships as a practical alternative to university and a fast route into a career of choice - providing a great range of tangible benefits to someone who has just left school or college, as well as employees already working in a business:

The Apprenticeship Advantage:

- An apprentice's training is funded by the Employer or through a co-investment between the government and Employer, which means the apprentice can avoid the large debts associated with going to university.
- Apprentices earn a wage as they learn - developing new skills while enjoying rewards and benefits such as paid holidays.
- Apprentices receive practical, on-the-job work experience that puts them ahead of their 'competition'.
- Apprentices gain first-hand knowledge of their chosen industry, to see if they really want to pursue it as a career.
- Apprentices gain a nationally recognised qualification, which is highly attractive to their current and future Employers.
- Apprentices work alongside experienced colleagues, learning at a pace suited to their individual needs, with the support of a mentor.
- Apprentices rise through the ranks quicker, according to national statistics.
- An Apprenticeship can lead to pretty much any type of career and is a great way for anyone to work their way up.

Apprenticeships are for everyone, everywhere.

Apprenticeships really are for everyone aged 16 or over - with the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW) investing seriously in making sure that people from all backgrounds and experiences can apply for these life-changing learn-while-you-earn programmes. Encouraging applications from a diversity of communities is central to the future success of Apprenticeships, with the NTfW running three online inclusion events during this year's National Apprenticeship Week - each of which are free to attend on MS Teams:

Tuesday 8 February 2022 – Supporting Disabled People into Apprenticeships.

Wednesday 9 February 2022 – Supporting Females into Construction Roles.

Thursday 10 February 2022 – Supporting Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic People into Apprenticeships.

Each event will include information and insights on apprenticeship vacancies, employer case studies, learner support, studying through the medium of Welsh or bilingually - all finishing with a Question & Answer session.

The message is clear. Apprenticeships offer a remarkable variety of fabulous opportunities to a wide range of people - a fact that will hopefully resonate with potential apprentices of all ages and life experiences throughout National Apprenticeship Week.

To find out more about the Venture Skills & Talent hub, go to www.venturewales.org