

# Environmental health apprenticeships Employer's guide



This document provides guidance for employers who are considering setting up an apprenticeship in their organisation. Please also see the [Employer's checklist](#), [Candidate pack](#) and [Job advert template](#).

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## Introduction

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### Who is this guide for?

Whether you have only recently heard about apprenticeships in environmental health or are already familiar with them, there is a lot to consider when thinking about whether they would benefit your organisation.

Apprenticeships are not a quick fix, here today and gone tomorrow, nor are they the sole answer alone to our workforce crisis. However, they will play an important role in environmental health workforce planning, and could help lead you to establish a more sustainable future for your workforce.

So to help you make the most of the opportunities that apprenticeships have to offer, we have developed this guide. It was put together with the assistance of environmental health team leaders, managers, course providers and heads of service to provide you with all the information you need to take the first steps towards employing an environmental health apprentice.

We hope that you will find it packed with useful guidance, points to consider, and lots of encouragement.

### What is the purpose of this guide?

Our 2021 Workforce Survey report on local authorities in England found that up to 70% do not currently employ any apprentices in environmental health. At the same time, as many as 80% are using agency staff to prop up their environmental health services.<sup>1</sup>

We firmly believe that apprenticeships can help build capacity and resilience in the environmental health workforce and make it more sustainable by building long-term resource and capacity.

This guide is therefore intended to help demystify the process of taking on an apprentice and highlight the advantages of taking on an apprentice.

It provides a step-by-step overview of the decision-making process, from getting internal buy-in to claiming levy payments for your new apprentice.

It will help answer most of the questions you may have about starting up an apprenticeship and give you a good understanding of the process.



## About environmental health apprenticeships

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### What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship in environmental health offers an alternative route towards becoming a competent and qualified Environmental Health Practitioner (EHP). Unlike a traditional degree course, it works by combining study and work to provide both practical experience and academic knowledge of the subject.

The apprenticeship in environmental health lasts for four years, and at the end of it the apprentice will gain a BSc in Environmental Health and gain the Environmental Health apprenticeship certificate from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

UK apprenticeship policy is devolved, and so environmental health apprenticeships are currently only available to employers in England.

### Why should you consider taking on an apprentice?

The main advantage of an apprenticeship is that the apprentice is very much based in practice, with this practice forming a key part of the assessment for both the degree and end-point assessment.<sup>2</sup>

Businesses may also use the apprenticeship to upskill suitable existing staff, adding to their flexible workforce. Apprenticeship programmes are also a great way to invest in the local community by providing opportunities for local young people to gain a profession and skills.

Hiring an apprentice will not necessarily help with capacity issues during their first year when they are required to spend the most amount of time at university, but a good second, third and fourth year environmental health apprentice will begin to make a valuable contribution to your service. Many employers have told us how this builds loyalty with their staff, and that the contributions made in post continue after graduation, allowing you to 'grow your own'.

In addition, the apprenticeship route towards becoming an EHP is open to those who might not be able to afford university fees. The academic fees are covered by government funding and apprentices are paid a salary by their employer for the duration of their apprenticeship. The apprenticeship route into the profession is therefore much more accessible for the person being trained.

**“ We’re using the apprenticeship to ease recruitment problems in the longer term.”**

**Oliver Nelson, Environmental Health Manager at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**

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We understand that, for many local authorities and businesses, there are barriers to taking on an apprentice: a recruitment freeze, headcount cap, or financial issues related to funding the salary. However, the Level 6 degree apprenticeship can be used to upskill your existing staff, subject to them meeting university entrance requirements, thereby boosting their performance and making them feel valued. This can in turn lead to improved staff retention.

For the right candidate, this is a great way for an employer to upskill and nurture their own talent pool without the constraints of recruitment freezes. Investing in your current staff can be more efficient than hiring new recruits and is likely to increase productivity, as well as futureproofing your workforce.

### Who can become an apprentice?

Anyone can become an environmental health apprentice, subject to them being employed in a role that will enable them to engage in work activities that are relevant to developing the knowledge, skills and behaviours required. They can over time choose to operate as a Registered or Chartered EHP.

Applicants must be able to meet the entry requirements for the university degree programme, live in England and not be in full-time education.<sup>3</sup> You can recruit a suitable candidate externally or use the apprenticeship to upskill existing staff.

When the apprentice is sourced from existing employees, this would need to be part of a wider development discussion with individuals, as it is a big undertaking to juggle working with studying. However, for the right person, an apprenticeship can be a great career development opportunity.

“ Our motivation for taking on apprentices is the development of existing staff. It’s a great opportunity for those like Lacey, who are progressing really well and are valued employees but have hit a bit of a ceiling.”

**Paul Brookes, Public Health and Protection Services Manager, Chelmsford City Council**

An apprentice is expected to develop a range of core skills during the role including:

- Ability to work independently with a high level of autonomy and as part of a wider team
- Organised and able to prioritise their own case load, using a risk-based approach (typically reporting to a line manager)
- Ability to work largely unsupervised, exercising initiative and professional judgement, making quick evidence-based decisions
- Ability to work at pace, ensuring outcomes and objectives are achieved within desired timeframes
- Ability to use a range of safety equipment, sampling equipment, measuring equipment, photographic and video equipment and electronic equipment
- Managing sensitive and personal information
- Commitment to own continuing professional development
- Excellent written and oral communication skills
- Excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills <sup>6</sup>

### What are the entrance requirements for apprentices?

Employers and universities will determine their own entry requirements, which typically will be three A levels or equivalent. Most candidates will have at least one A level in a science or technology. It is best to speak to the course provider as alternative qualifications at Level 3 may be considered.<sup>4</sup> Relevant or prior experiential learning may also be considered as an alternative.

Applicants will also need English and Maths at Level 2. (Level 2 qualifications include GCSEs of grade 4 or better.<sup>5</sup>) Candidates must also have evidence of their ability to successfully engage with reflective work-based learning based on a pre-entry assessment.

### What will an apprentice gain during the four-year programme?

Apprenticeship roles in environmental health are at Level 6, which is equivalent to a bachelor’s degree level. This is a great route into the environmental health profession, leading to someone being trained up to become a fully qualified and experienced EHP at the end of the four-year programme.

### What are the requirements for the employer?

Apprenticeships are structured programmes which have a few important requirements which you should be aware of.

- Applicants should be employed in a role that will enable them to engage in work activities that are relevant to developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours <sup>7</sup>
- Employers must accept the **employer agreement** in order to access government funding through the apprenticeship service. The employer agreement is a legally binding contract between your organisation and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) <sup>8</sup>



- The [Apprenticeship Standard](#), updated in 2020, show what an apprentice will do, the skills required and job roles they can perform <sup>9</sup>
- Employers need to support their apprentices to complete the academic part of the programme, which means students must be able to have 20% of their time off the job. This will include time to attend university and other off-the-job time to enable the apprentice to meet the apprenticeship standards in assessment preparation. In practice, the academic study at university tends to be ‘front-loaded’, with more study time in the first year. This can include 24 weeks of term time, plus assessment commitments <sup>10</sup>
- At the end of the apprenticeship, apprentices must also complete an ‘End Point Assessment’ (EPA). The EPA is an independent assessment that gives employers an assurance that the apprentice has successfully completed the environmental health apprenticeship standard and so can perform in the environmental health occupation and can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the environmental health occupational standard <sup>11</sup>

Taking on an apprentice will require the wider team to act as sponsors to the apprentice and enables them to gain environmental health practical experience. We know from our Workforce Survey that mentoring and supervision of an apprentice or trainee are potential barriers for departments already feeling the acute pressure of high workloads, so this consideration needs to be weighed up with the value and capacity an apprentice will bring in the latter years of their studies. The Apprenticeship Standard includes a list of [occupational duties](#) you will need to support them through, and this may help your decision-making.

“ We’d been considering what we could do to increase capacity. With an apprentice, in the first year they’re at university a lot, but less so as they go through the course and obviously after four years you get yourself a fully competent practitioner who might go on to do the chartered programme and contribute very positively to what you’re doing. So, we’re using the apprenticeship as a way to ease the recruitment problems in the longer term.”

**Oliver Nelson, Environmental Health Manager at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**



## Costs of an apprenticeship

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### What is the cost to the employer?

Here is an overview of the financial implications of hiring an apprentice:

- Employers will need to pay apprentices a salary (to be determined by employer but must be at least the national minimum wage) throughout the four-year programme as well as costs of travel to their training provider
- The Apprenticeship Levy can be used by the employer to pay up to 95% of the course fees to the academic provider
- There is a funding band maximum but you are allowed to pay the difference from your own budget if the price of training is more than this
- If an apprentice is under the age of 25, when starting the apprenticeship, and has previously been in local authority care, they may be eligible for a [bursary payment](#)
- An apprentice should be treated as any other employee and should be entitled to the same benefits. This includes National Insurance contributions, holiday allowance and any other benefits and incentives, such as pensions

### What is the Apprenticeship Levy?

All employers, with a wage bill of over £3m in England, pay the Apprenticeship Levy at the rate of 0.5% of their total bill. The Levy is collected by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) each month and then transferred to your National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) account. You will need to check whether this is already set up with your HR department. It is accessible for 24 months to spend on apprenticeship training or the funds will expire and be returned to central government to allocate to other organisations.

As an employer, you will pay 5% towards the cost of the apprenticeship training. The government will pay the rest (95%, although this might be more so it is advisable to check with the course provider) up to the funding band maximum (£22,000). All apprenticeships that started before 1 April 2019 will continue at the previous co-investment rate of 10% for the employer and 90% provided by the government via the Levy.<sup>12</sup>

The amount of funding entering your account each month is calculated by: the Levy you declare to HMRC through the 'pay as you earn' (PAYE) process, multiplied by the proportion of your wage bill paid to your workforce who live in England, plus a 10% government top-up on this amount.<sup>13</sup> More information on this is provided later in this guide.<sup>14</sup>

It is likely that there will be other apprentices already training in your organisation, and the available funds may be split between different departments. You will therefore need to speak to colleagues in your Human Resources (HR) and finance departments, to explore how decisions are made about use of the funds and how environmental health services may be able to benefit.

Your business may have an apprenticeship strategy setting out current priorities for funding so don't be surprised if you are asked to develop a business case for environmental health. We can help you with this – see our [tips for putting together a business case](#) to help you get buy-in from senior management or the wider business.

The Levy is proportional to the total salary bill so the larger the employer, the greater the Levy, and the more opportunities there should be for funding. If you spend all of your Levy allocation, then you can also look at co-investment with the government where they will provide 90% of the funding for the apprenticeship/s so you will only have to find 10%.

There are no limits on the number of apprenticeships, but your organisation will need to meet funding regulations. Your apprentices must be learning substantive new skills and need to be spending 20% of the job learning these new skills.

### What are incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice?

The payments are sent from the government in two equal instalments for each apprenticeship in post. The first payment is due after an apprentice completes 90 days of their apprenticeship and the second is due after 365 days. The training provider needs to confirm to ESFA when an apprentice is ready for each payment. The payment will not be made until ESFA have received and verified the organisation and finance details.<sup>15</sup>

### What salary should employers be paying?

Rates of pay vary with National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates set by your organisation. Rates of pay can also depend on the age of apprentices and the year that they begin the programme.

Apprentices are entitled to the lower 'apprenticeship rate' of pay if:

- They are under 19; or
- If they are over 19 and in the first year of their apprenticeship

Apprentices over 19, who have completed the first year of their apprenticeship, are entitled to the correct minimum wage for their age.<sup>16</sup>

The National Living Wage minimum hourly rate is payable to all employees from the age of 23 and above, while the London Living Wage is higher to reflect the high cost of living in the capital.<sup>17</sup>

### Do employers have to pay National Insurance and provide holiday allowance?

It is important to remember that apprentices are entitled to the same benefits as any other employee. For example, apprentices are allowed 20 days paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays.<sup>18</sup>

The government has published a guide for employers on changes to National Insurance contributions for apprentices aged under 25. If you employ an apprentice and follow an approved UK government statutory apprenticeship framework you may not need to pay employer Class 1 National Insurance contributions (NICs) on their earnings below £827 a week (£43,000 a year).<sup>19</sup>

There may be other costs that you need to consider, such as the apprentice's travel to and from university, regular business travel and other expenses.





## Setting up a new apprenticeship

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### What is the process of setting up a new apprenticeship?

The government has published guidance on how to [access the funding from the Apprenticeship Levy](#), however you should also liaise with colleagues in your business as this may be managed centrally.

We have also put together a [checklist](#) for you to work through as you go through the process of planning for, recruiting and inducting your apprentice.

As of January 2020, ESFA is inviting all employers to use the apprenticeship service. Employers can now create an [account to manage apprenticeships](#) which will allow them to get funding to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment costs.<sup>20</sup>

### How to find a training provider?

The BSc Environmental Health Practitioner apprenticeship programme is currently offered by the following UK centres. We suggest contacting your local provider to discuss the course in more detail, registration capacity for the coming academic year and how the Level 6 apprenticeship could work for your business.

#### Midlands

Contact: Dan Appasamy, [d.appasamy2@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:d.appasamy2@wlv.ac.uk)



#### Northern England

Contact: Hayley Robinson-Mitchell,  
[h.s.robinson-mitchell@leedsmet.ac.uk](mailto:h.s.robinson-mitchell@leedsmet.ac.uk)



#### South East England

Contact: Hasan Erdogan, [EHAApprentice@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:EHAApprentice@mdx.ac.uk)



#### South West England

Contact: Mark Hardwick, [mark.hardwick@weston.ac.uk](mailto:mark.hardwick@weston.ac.uk)



## What can your HR department help with?

For most large employers this step should already be included in your recruitment procedures but an approach to your HR department or personnel service at an early stage would be beneficial. In general, your HR will set up the necessary arrangement, but this will need to be done in conjunction with the apprentice and their line manager.

For existing staff, there can often be little for HR to support after this stage. HR will need to complete Levy returns for central government and manage the Levy account. HR will also need to progress plans for the spend of the Levy and advise and support managers and employees where necessary, in supporting the development needs of the organisation and the Levy spend to avoid loss.

Degree level apprenticeships are still relatively new and many of the established procedures might be more suited to lower level apprenticeships, so these may require review. If you don't have these support systems available to you, there are lots of [video guides](#) available to walk you through the process of managing the Levy.

## What support can CIEH provide?

We are committed to raising the profile of environmental health and promoting it as a rewarding career choice for both school leavers and career changers. Our [#ChooseEnvironmentalHealth](#) campaign will continue to raise the profile of the profession and the fantastic opportunities it presents.

This is why we have created a [toolkit of resources](#) to support employers in recruiting apprentices, which this guide is a part of. Other resources include sample job descriptions, person specifications and top tips on putting together a successful business plan.

To give you the best chance of reaching the widest possible audience, we can offer a free advertisement for Level 6 apprenticeship positions on our [EHN Jobs website](#) and in our members' magazine, EHN. To take advantage of this, please contact Paul Prior on 020 7827 9929 or [p.prior@cieh.org](mailto:p.prior@cieh.org). Terms and conditions will apply.

We are also working on a set of resources, which will help with the long-term aims of raising the profile and work of environmental health as a profession. These will include toolkits to help you pick up and run a school assembly with ease, thereby utilising the connections that we know many of our members hold within their communities, as well as lesson plans that introduce hygiene to primary school children.

## Ideas for making an apprenticeship work for you

We know there is lots of innovation taking place with employers who are making apprenticeships work for both the individual and the business such as sharing an apprentice or buddying up in smaller areas, while apprentices themselves have formed WhatsApp groups to support each other.

Employers can also link up to support each other, and in turn provide a network that will benefit the apprentices. These are people who will study together for four years and it is important for them to have lifelong professional associates to help them grow in their future career. Employers can also draw upon existing regional and national groups for support and inspiration.

**“ I think there's a great opportunity for employers to set themselves up with a pipeline of environmental health talent. We're a small authority so will probably have one apprentice at a time, but larger employers could take on one a year. This could really help to fill the gaps in the profession that we have to address.”**

**Oliver Nelson, Environmental Health Manager at Epsom and Ewell Borough Council**

We would love to profile interesting innovation in future issues of EHN to share with the wider environmental health community. If you have found an innovative way to give apprentices exposure to all areas of environmental health or any suggestions on how we can improve this guide, we would love to hear from you, please contact us on [info@cieh.org](mailto:info@cieh.org).

## Useful links

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[Apprenticeship alerts](#) from GOV.UK

[Apprenticeship funding: how it works](#) – information on apprenticeship funding, including the Apprenticeship Levy and the online apprenticeship service

[Apprenticeship Levy Manual](#) – this is a guide to the Apprenticeship Levy and published by HMRC

GOV.UK Apprenticeship Help Desk: call 0800 150160 or email [helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk](mailto:helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk)

[GOV.UK Apprenticeship Service YouTube channel](#)

[Pay Apprenticeship Levy](#) – information on when you have to pay the Apprenticeship Levy and how to report your payments

## Other resources in this toolkit

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[Candidate pack](#)

[Employer's checklist](#)

[Job advert template](#)

## References

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1. [Environmental health workforce survey report: local authorities in England](#), CIEH, April 2021
2. [What are the benefits of hiring an apprentice?](#), HM Government
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6. [Environmental Health Practitioner \(Integrated Degree\)](#), Institute for Apprentices & Technical Education
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8. [Agreement between an employer and the Education and Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\)](#), Department of Education
9. [Withdrawal of apprenticeship frameworks](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency
10. [Apprenticeships: off-the-job training](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency
11. [Environmental Health Practitioner \(Integrated Degree\)](#), Institute for Apprentices & Technical Education
12. [Apprenticeship funding bands](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency
13. [Sign in or create an account - Find an apprenticeship \(findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk\)](#)
14. [Sign in or create an account - Find an apprenticeship \(findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk\)](#)
15. Ibid.

16. [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates](#), Gov.uk
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18. [Employing an apprentice](#), Gov.uk
19. [Paying employers National Insurance contributions for apprentices under 25](#), HMRC
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