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# Employer Handbook



This Employer Handbook has been prepared to help support you with the training programme for your Apprentice/Learner.

The funding for your Apprenticeship programme is provided by the government. The Derbyshire Network is the contract holder with the Skills Funding Agency (part of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) for the funding your Training Provider receives to deliver the learning programme to your Apprentice/Learner. This means that we are ultimately responsible for the success of the programme and for the manner in which it is carried out and delivered.

The Derbyshire Network is a not-for-profit, membership based, organisation dedicated to representing and supporting Training Providers and the development of Apprenticeships.

As the contract holder we set very high standards for the delivery of the learning programme for your Apprentice/Learner and expect your Training Provider to meet these at all times. This means that we will contact you and your Apprentice/Learner occasionally to check with you that the programme is going well and that your Apprentice/Learner is on track to achieve the qualification at the agreed completion date. Of course, you are welcome to contact us at any time to discuss any problems or concerns, you or your Apprentice/Learner might have – our contact details are at the back of this Handbook.

In order to make the journey for your Apprentice/Learner run as smoothly as possible we expect, as a minimum, the following to take place:

- A full and in-depth learner initial assessment is carried out in order to accurately identify the learner and employer needs in order to place the learner onto the right programme at the right level. Obviously it is important that as the employer you are part of this process.
- Once a programme has been agreed with the learner and yourselves a full learning plan is produced and confirmed by signature from all parties with applicable target dates agreed for each element of the learner programme.
- A 'Learner Agreement' is produced and signed (this could be an annex to a Contract of Employment) that highlights and agrees the responsibilities of the Learner, Employer, Training Provider and The Derbyshire Network and ensures that legislative aspects of a training programme are adhered to.
- When the Apprentice/Learner starts the programme, the Training Provider must carry out a full induction with the learner so that he or she is fully aware of how their programme will proceed and the responsibilities of all parties involved in ensuring that the training programme is completed successfully. Where the learner is also a new employee, it is also expected that the employer will carry out a full induction for the learner to their job role and your company.

- Once the programme has started, the Training Provider must carry out a Learner progress review within the first 6 weeks of commencement and no more than every 12 weeks after that. This is to ensure that the learner is on track with their programme and has agreed actions for progress to the next planned review. We also expect that as the employer you are also part of this progress review process and that you receive feedback on your employee's development.
- Within the learners programme there must be agreed elements of both on and off-the-job training as well as assessment of competence sessions.
- We recommend that an in-house mentor is appointed by you in order to give support and guidance when the Training Provider is not present.
- Where a learner is falling behind schedule and therefore at risk of not meeting their target dates, an action plan should be agreed between the Training Provider, learner and yourself in order to place the learner back on track.
- On completion of the learners' programme an end/exit review should be carried out with the learner and the employer to review the delivery of the programme and discuss possible continuation of learning opportunities.

# Employer Charter

At The Derbyshire Network, our service is built upon the values of Quality, Achievement and Partnerships. All our staff are committed to these values and we regularly seek feedback from our learners and partners to support our aim in providing high quality training solutions that can make a real difference to your business.

## What you can expect from our Sub-Contractors

- High quality training delivered by qualified trainers and assessors with professional experience in their particular subject area.
- Regular progress reviews and feedback to learners and employers.
- Opportunities for learners and employers to feedback to us through questionnaires, surveys and evaluations.

## What we ask of you

- Support your employees throughout the duration of the training, including time off for study, exams etc.
- Encourage employees to commit fully to the training on offer and provide assessment opportunities where appropriate.
- Encourage employees to inform your Training Provider of any learning difficulty or disability they may have so that appropriate additional support can put in place.
- To comply with relevant health and safety legislation.
- Encourage employees to treat fellow learners and staff with respect and courtesy as set out in your Training Provider's equal opportunities policy.

This booklet has been produced so that you get the most from working with your Training Provider.

## **What this Handbook is about**

Helping you to ensure that your employees

- have the necessary personal qualities and aptitudes to become an Apprentice/Learner
- get to know the health and safety and employment laws and regulations they need to understand when they start as an employee
- understand what training they will get, how and when, and why it is important
- make good progress, are assessed effectively for their learning programme and become productive employees
- are given support as they need it to enable them to work effectively
- are treated fairly in accordance with equality of opportunities laws, and protected from harassment and bullying

It is also about helping to ensure that:

- we all communicate effectively, so that all concerned benefit from the experience
- the quality of training the Apprentice/Learner receives is of a high standard, so that they become effective and productive employees

## Recruiting an Apprentice/Learner

You may have been recruiting for many years but it always pays to check from time to time that the way we do things is the most effective and efficient and that it is legal.

It is important that you:

- are very clear about the personal qualities and aptitudes you think a person may need to become effective and productive employee
- give applicants clear and accurate information about the work, training and assessment etc., so that yours and the applicants time is not wasted
- have an effective way of interviewing potential staff which helps you to identify if they have the necessary qualities and aptitudes
- recognise the value of encouraging and considering applicants from different ethnic groups and people with disabilities
- interview people in such a way that it complies with the various laws that apply to recruitment of employees

Personnel from your Training Provider will be happy to advise you on any matter concerned with recruitment and will, if required, actively support you in this process.

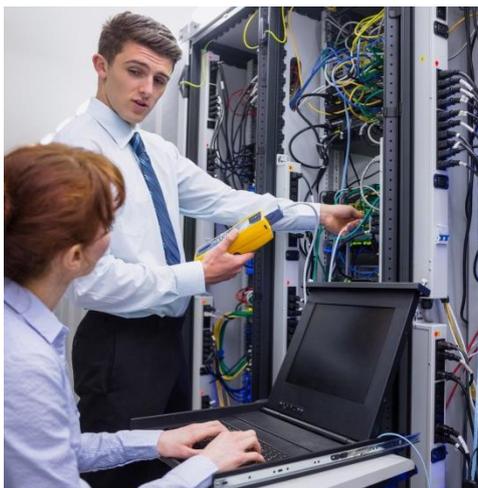
You should also be aware that all Apprenticeship vacancies should be posted on the Apprenticeship Vacancy Online System. Your Training Provider will assist you in placing any vacancies onto the system and forwarding all applications received.

There is a section explaining Apprenticeships for Employers on the GOV.UK website. The address is [www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice](http://www.gov.uk/take-on-an-apprentice) which gives more detail about taking on an Apprentice/Learner and the benefits that can be gained by your company.

## Getting Your Apprentice/Learner Started

The first days at work, i.e. the induction period, can make a significant difference to whether the recruitment of a new Apprentice/Learner will be successful or not.

It is important that you:



- show your Apprentice/Learner where everything they need to know about is
- introduce them to the people they will be working with, including their work supervisor in such a way that they feel welcomed and accepted
- train them in all things related to health and safety, before they are asked to perform work activities that have any significant health and safety implications
- explain company policies and procedures, and terms and conditions of employment
- ensure they know about what work activities they will be involved in, what training they will be getting 'on-the-job' and when, and when the 'off-the-job' training is likely to start

A comprehensive list of induction activities that you need to consider is provided at the end of this handbook.

The Training Provider will also carry out a full induction with your Apprentice/Learner. This should cover introduction to the Training Provider and the learning programme they will be undertaking. It should also cover reinforcement of Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and also delivery processes and timetabling of the course they are about to embark on.

## Planning Training

The Training Provider will provide off-the-job training which may need to take place at their premises, which will be discussed with you, including when, what and how it will be delivered.

However, you will be playing a significant part in training your Apprentice/Learner also. In order to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, and so that we are all clear about who will do what, it is important that:

- The Training Provider staff, yourself and the Apprentice/Learner, work together to produce training plans for the training that will take place both at work and off-the-job.
- The plan for **training at work** should show what the main focus of training will be in each 3 month period. This should be agreed with the Apprentice/Learner and yourself.

We recognise that it is difficult to be precise about when each aspect of training will take place, because as the Apprentice/Learner becomes more competent, the training may depend upon the business needs and the work tasks that need to be done.

The plan should:

- link (where this applies) to the training sessions that will be undertaken with your Training Provider
- show who is responsible for the different aspects of the Apprentice's/Learner's training, if this is to be done by more than one person
- identify targets for what the Apprentice/Learner has to achieve and by when
- indicate when the Apprentice/Learner progress will be reviewed
- identify at what points assessment is likely to occur

The Training Provider staff will supply a form that can be used to produce the plan.

The **plan for off-the-job** training with your Training Provider will show exactly what the Apprentice/Learner will be doing at each session they attend with the Training Provider, including what 'additional support' your Apprentice/Learner will receive.

***Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.***

## Training at Work

We are sure that you would agree that good training is important to ensure that, your Employee gets the skills and qualification that enables them to:

- work to the required standards
- meet and exceed the expectations of your customers/business through the work they do.

Good training as you will appreciate does not happen by accident. Your Employee needs to:

- be supervised by a competent person
- have tasks and key information clearly explained
- be shown how to perform skills
- be given the opportunity to perform skills and tasks under supervision
- be given constructive feedback on their performance, so that they know what they need to do to improve

This cycle needs then to be repeated until your Employee performs to the required standard.



Other aspects of good training include:

- introducing your Employee to progressively more complex skills at a rate consistent with their ability to learn
- ensuring your employee acquires the knowledge of how and why (the theory) tasks and skills are performed as they are
- ensuring that work supervisors communicate effectively and continue to update their own skills
- ensuring your employee is exposed to a wide range of learning situations, and has access to good equipment and resources that will enable them to learn

## Reviewing Progress

Developing the capability of an Apprentice/Learner is a joint responsibility between the Training Provider and your organisation. To ensure that all are playing their part effectively, it is important that when progress review meetings are arranged, a member of the Training Provider's staff sits down for half an hour or so, with the Apprentice/Learner and the appropriate work supervisor or yourself, to review the progress the Apprentice/Learner is making.

The purpose of these reviews is to:

- ensure the Apprentice/Learner is learning, acquiring the appropriate skills, and making the progress they should be making
- identify what action is required if the relevant degree of progress is not being made
- help, where necessary to keep the Apprentice/Learner motivated by recognising what they have achieved
- give the Apprentice/Learner the opportunity to talk about how they feel about the programme
- address any behaviour, time-keeping and work relationship issues early, and before they become a problem
- identify what training and assessment will take place before the next review, and what arrangements may need to be made to ensure this happens

Regular reviews of progress ensure that the Apprentice/Learner is kept on track, and that any issues can be dealt with before they become a significant problem. As explained earlier your Training Provider will carry out the first review within 6 weeks of the Apprentice/Learner start date. Subsequent reviews should be completed to a maximum timescale of every 12 weeks.

These are also good opportunities for the Training Provider staff to check with you, that they are meeting your expectations.

## Assessment of Learning

In order to make sure that the Apprentice/Learner is performing to the standards required, and to ensure that they achieve their qualification, each Apprentice/Learner will have their competence assessed regularly.

The standard required is a national standard and it is specified in the NVQ/QCF documentation you will be shown. You may have achieved an NVQ yourself and be familiar with this.

If you have staff trained as Assessors, and have agreed to them being responsible for the assessment of the Apprentice/Learner, then the Training Provider's role will be to monitor this assessment, through what is called Internal Verification (IV) or Internal Quality Assurance (IQA).

If this is not the case then the Training Provider's staff will be responsible for conducting the assessments. It is important however that work supervisors support this process by:

- helping to identify assessment opportunities in the workplace
- helping the Apprentice/Learner to gather evidence they need to prove competence and knowledge
- discussing with the assessor and the Apprentice/Learner how well they have performed tasks that are outlined within their qualification
- signing witness statements which confirm the Apprentice's/Learner's competence in given tasks and skills

Periodically, the organisation that ensures that the Training Provider staff are assessing Apprentices/Learners properly will send a person to assess their performance. This person is called an External Verifier. He or she may ask to speak to you and your Apprentice/Learner and look at the Apprentice's/Learner's NVQ/QCF portfolio of evidence. It is important that you are able to support this process.

In the same way, The Derbyshire Network may arrange to visit to speak to yourself and/or your Apprentice/Learner in order to review the quality of the training and assessment being delivered on our behalf by your Training Provider.

## Supporting Your Apprentice/Learner

Every Apprentice/Learner will need some level of support in order to complete their qualification, and reach the standard of performance which ensures that they are making a really productive contribution to your business.

Experience has shown that Apprentices/Learners that do not receive effective support, can become confused and demotivated and as a result, abandon their training and quite possibly their employment with you. This means that you and your Training Provider will have wasted valuable time and effort, which is a cost to us both.

Working together we can make sure this does not happen, by ensuring that the relevant work supervisor/mentor:

- understands sufficiently about the qualification to help the Apprentice/Learner identify and gather evidence of the competence
- reminds the Apprentice/Learner of the benefits of getting a qualification to prove their ability, especially at times when they find things difficult
- provides opportunities for the Apprentice/Learner to practice skills, particularly where the skills in question are not frequently required in the job, but are important to the qualification
- promotes a positive view of off-the-job training, and ensures that the Apprentice/Learner attends the sessions they should attend
- takes a positive interest in the Apprentice/Learner's welfare, so that they can identify and discuss with them, any issues at an early stage, before they become major problems
- inform the Training Provider staff if Apprentice/Learner indicate that they are thinking of leaving, so that appropriate action can be taken, where possible, to resolve whatever is causing them to express such a view
- can ensure that Apprentice/Learner has sufficient time to work on organising their qualification evidence at work.

Investing time in giving the Apprentice/Learner support will pay significant dividends to your business and the wellbeing of your Apprentice/Learner.

## Equality and Diversity

You will be aware that it is illegal to discriminate unfairly against people because of their race, gender or disability.



Because the Government is contributing to the cost of training your Apprentice/Learner, it naturally expects both the employer and the Training Provider to observe these laws. It also expects that working together we should take positive steps to encourage recruitment from groups of people that are often excluded from training and work.

The Government does not expect, that in taking such steps, employers will recruit people who do not have the essential capability to do the job they need doing. Meeting Government expectations is about ensuring we encourage applications for jobs from people in such groups, and ensuring that we give positive consideration to such applications.

You can ensure that you meet your obligations in this area by:

- displaying and publicising an equality and diversity statement
- complying with equality and diversity laws
- making sure that recruitment and selection practices, for all staff, comply with these laws
- taking immediate action to address any alleged discrimination, harassment or bullying
- ensuring that all employees are aware that they should treat colleagues fairly, with respect, and in ways that are appropriate to their needs and circumstances
- ensuring that Apprentices/Learners and other staff, understand what to do if they have a complaint about the way they are treated

The Training Provider staff or The Derbyshire Network will be pleased to provide guidance on equality and diversity which will help you to ensure that you do not experience the inconvenience and costs that a prosecution under these laws can involve.

It is worth considering that most people with disabilities do not need to use a wheelchair. The term disability covers a huge spectrum of capability, both mental and physical.

It is also worth considering that your customers/clients are diverse in terms of their race, gender and ability, and that a positive approach to equality and diversity can enhance the appeal of your business to different customer/client groups.

## Quality Assurance

At The Derbyshire Network we are concerned that the Training Provider not just does a good job, but are continuously looking for ways in which they can do that job better. We know that you have a similar view about your business.

The purpose of quality assurance is to ensure that your Employee receives a good standard of training and support and that working together we strive to continuously improve that standard. This is the expectation of the Government, and their Inspectors who periodically check the performance of The Derbyshire Network and the Training Providers that contract with us.

The Derbyshire Network has the primary responsibility for ensuring that this is achieved, but we cannot meet our obligations without your support.

You can help us meet our obligations by:

- asking Apprentice/Learners for suggestions and acting on good ones, about how training at work could be improved
- periodically evaluating the effectiveness of the way the Apprentice/Learner is trained at work, and taking action to make it better
- fulfilling the requirements set out in this handbook
- suggesting how the training and assessment that the Training Provider undertakes, could be improved
- responding to requests from the Training Provider for feedback, on how effective they are at:
  - managing the training and development of your Apprentice/Learner
  - meeting your needs



Periodically Government Inspectors from the Skills Funding Agency or OFSTED will conduct inspections of the Training Provider's performance. The Inspectors may ask to speak to you and your Apprentice/Learner, and look at the Apprentice's/Learner's portfolio of evidence. It is important that you are able to support this process.

## Health and Safety

Your Training Provider has a duty of care for the Apprentice/Learner that it supports, both whilst they are at work and when they are undertaking training with the Training Provider. This means that we all must take reasonable steps to ensure that Apprentice/Learner is not at risk in either of these situations. To ensure that we fulfil this responsibility we will periodically check the health and safety arrangements that are in place to protect the Apprentice/Learner.



As an employer you are no doubt aware that you also have a duty of care. This duty is regulated by laws such as the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act; the 1997 Health and Safety (Young Persons) Regulations; the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Act (1963), and other laws that apply to specific types of employment. These laws require that all staff, including Apprentices/Learners are protected from illness or injury.

You can make sure that you are meeting your obligations by ensuring that:

- your Apprentice/Learner:
  - is given good initial health and safety training so that they fully understand all workplace health and safety arrangements
  - know who to speak to if they have concerns
- these arrangements comply with legal requirements
- health and safety is incorporated as appropriate, into all elements of training at work
- all accidents and significant 'near misses' regarding your Apprentice/Learner are recorded in the workplace accident book, and copies of these records sent to your Training Provider
- risks to which an Apprentice/Learner is exposed are assessed, and the general principle of prevention applied
- risks, are where possible eliminated, or reduced to the lowest reasonably practical level
- Apprentices/Learners are properly supervised by a competent person
- The Training Provider workplace health and safety checks are fully supported, and outcomes promptly acted upon
- Apprentices/Learners are covered by your public and employer liability cover

The Training Provider staff will be happy to provide information about all aspects of Health and Safety.

## What You Agree To Do

As the employer you agree to meet the requirements of the Employer Agreement. This in general terms means ensuring that the Apprentice/Learner:

- is given a thorough induction into the workplace
- has a written workplace training programme that is updated regularly
- is trained effectively by competent people
- is given appropriate personal support, to help them deal with problems and difficulties they may encounter
- is not subject to harassment, bullying or any other form of unfair or discriminatory treatment
- attends work and training provided by the Training Provider as required and on time

You also agree to ensure that:

- the appropriate work supervisor participates productively in periodic reviews of the Apprentice's/Learner's progress
- work supervisors and other staff provide support to the Apprentice/Learner and the Training Provider staff, to ensure that effective assessment can take place
- complaints by the Apprentice/Learner will result in positive and appropriate action, of which the Training Provider will be notified
- provide a healthy and safe work environment that complies with all relevant legislation and government regulations



# Induction Checklist

Introduction to supervisor and work colleagues

Training and development opportunities

Premises tour

Canteen / eating facilities

Toilet facilities

Working hours / breaks / timekeeping

Standards of dress

How to treat customers and respond to their needs

Health and Safety responsibilities

Accident procedure / first aid arrangements

Fire and evacuation procedure including fire exits

Administrative procedures

Discipline and grievance procedures

Sickness and absence procedures

Holidays

Rules and regulations

*Please note this is not an exhaustive list, merely a guide.*

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