

# PATHWAYS WITH PURPOSE: CHOOSING BETWEEN APPRENTICESHIPS & UNIVERSITY

*with*

Jonathan Mitchell

*Deputy Director of Future Skills & Innovation  
IfATE*



Skills England

# **Pathways with purpose**

Apprenticeships: a distinct option

Downe House Conference

18<sup>th</sup> June 2025

# What are apprenticeships?



Designed and approved by employers



Employed



Paid a salary



Contract



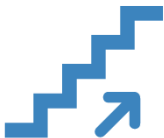
80% work  
20% off the job



Typically  
1-4 years +

**600+**

600+ standards



Intermediate -  
Degree level



Real job =  
responsibilities



Not the easy option

*At least a year's high-quality training and workplace experience, with a guarantee of some working hours spent in 'off the job' training*

# What are apprenticeships?



Designed and approved by employers



Employed



Paid a salary



Contract



80% work  
20% off the job



Typically  
1-4 years +

**600+**

600+ standards



Intermediate -  
Degree level



Real job =  
responsibilities



Not the easy option

## Dispelling some misconceptions:

- “Apprenticeships are for lower-achievers”
- “Apprenticeships lead to low-skilled or low-status jobs”
- “Apprenticeships aren’t valued in the labour market”
- “Full-time degrees provide better currency with employers”

# What might be going through their minds...?



## Apprentice

- I'd rather learn through hands-on workplace experience
- I don't need more time to reflect to know what job I want to do
- My key goal is my career and my job
- I care most about the prestige of my employer
- I'm ready to be given workplace accountability and responsibility
- I love the idea of working alongside others in a real job

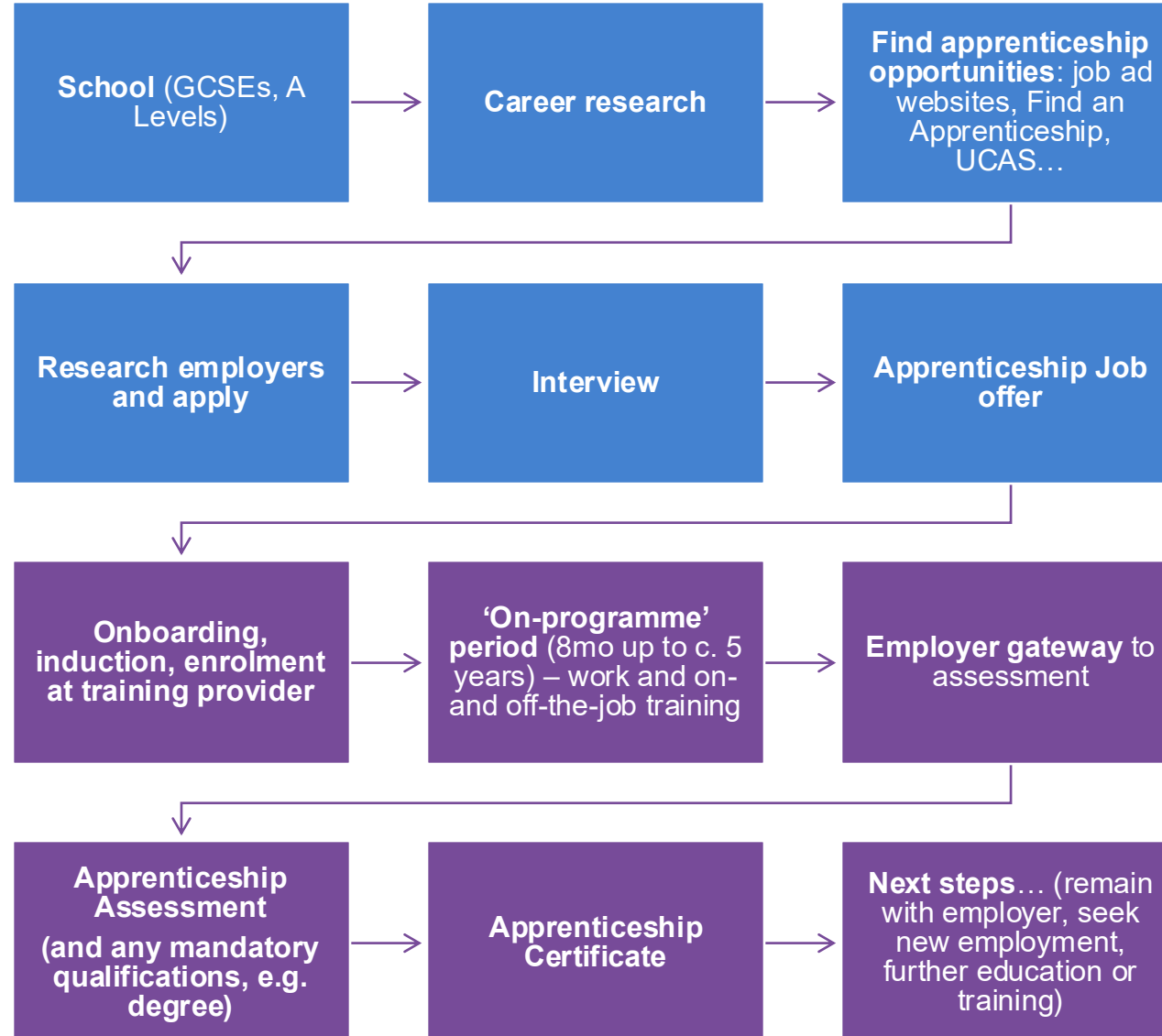


## Full-time college or university student

- I like learning the theory before putting it into practice
- I'm keen to learn more and keep my options open
- I don't know what job I want to do yet
- The best way to ready myself for the future is to get into the best possible college/university
- I need/want the wider experiences of being a university student
- I love formal learning and research

Think about **YOUR** preferences – which of these is most like **YOU**?

# An apprentice's journey...?



# The range of apprenticeships

*Around 700  
occupations*

*130+  
occupations  
at L6*

## Business



Auditor  
Fundraiser  
Accountant

## Beauty



Hairdressing  
Barbering  
Therapist

## Health



Nurse  
Lab Technician  
Doctor

## Sport



Coaching  
Safety  
Trainer

## Engineering



Robotics  
Nuclear  
Aerospace

## Law



Paralegal  
Solicitor  
Prosecution operations

## Digital and IT



Cyber  
Data  
Science  
Digital UX

## Media and Art



Graphic  
Fashion  
Interior

And many more ...

Selecting an apprenticeship is dependent on knowing what jobs exist and what a career you would like to enter.

**Have you thought about the jobs that exist where you might feel fulfilled?**

**Have you considered an apprenticeship as the route to a fulfilling career?**

<http://occupational-maps.skillsengland.education.gov.uk/>

# A word about occupational and qualification levels

From January 2026, L7 apprenticeships will be government funded only for learners up to age 21

Level	'Academic' equivalents	'Technical' – workplace training	'Technical' – full time training
1	GCSE grades 1-3	n/a	n/a
2	GCSE grades 4-9 IB MYP	Foundation Apps L2 Apps	L2 TQs
3	A Levels IB Diploma Pre-U	L3 Apps	T Levels L3 TQs
4	Cert Ed.	L4 Apps	HTQs
5	Foundation Degree Dip Ed.	L5 Apps	HTQs
6	'Academic' Bachelor's degree	L6 Apps L6 Degree Apps	n/a
7	'Academic' Master's degree	L7 Apps L7 Degree Apps	n/a
8	Doctorate	n/a	n/a



# Occupational Maps

<http://occupational-maps.skillsengland.education.gov.uk/>



# Occupational Maps

Filters

Technical education ▾

Levels ▾

Occupational standard status ▾

Careers-led ▾

Green ▾

Expand

Collapse

Change display ▾

Export to CSV

Print to PDF

Technical Occupations

Levels 2-3

Higher Technical Occupations

Levels 4-5

Professional Occupations

Levels 6-7

Engineering and manufacturing

Engineering, design and development

Design and development technician

Design and development technical manager

Design and development engineer

Engineering design and draughtsperson - Control & Instrumentation

Level 3

A TL

Engineering design and draughtsperson - Electrical

Level 3

A TL

Engineering design and draughtsperson - Mechanical

Level 3

A TL

Engineering manufacturing technician

Level 4

A HTQ

Product development manager

Level 4

Senior cad engineer

Level 4

Space engineering technician

Advanced robotics engineer

Level 6

A

Aerospace engineer

Level 6

A

Aerospace software development engineer

Level 6

Map Key

Potential occupational standard

Occupational standard in development

Approved occupational standard

Occupational standard without apprenticeship

Custom occupational card

A Apprenticeship

HTQ Higher Technical Qualification

TL T Level

Career starter apprenticeship

Royal apprenticeship

Occupational progression

Technical education progression

Mid green occupation

Dark green occupation

Favourite occupation

[View glossary of terms](#)

# Occupational Maps




## Early years educator


### Education and early years

Level 3 - [Technical Occupation](#)

Highly trained professionals who play a key role in ensuring that young children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe.

 Print to PDF

Reference: OCC0135


Status:  [Approved occupation](#)

Average (median) salary: £18,429 per year


SOC 2020 code: 3232 Early education and childcare practitioners

SOC 2020 sub unit groups:  
3232/00 Early education and childcare practitioners

### Technical Education Products

**A** ST0135: [Early years educator \(Level 3\)](#) Approved for delivery  [Career Starter Apprenticeship](#)

**TL** TL0008a: [Education and childcare - Early years educator \(Level 3\)](#)

 [Technical education progression](#)

### Employers involved in creating the standard:



Busy Bees Childcare, Darcy Bunnie Nursery, Little Cupcakes, Hollies Day Nursery, Blossom Day Nursery, Cheeky Monkeys, The Learning Tree, Shapes Day Nursery, Holmes Park Day Nursery, First Quest Day Nursery

## Summary

Early Years Educators, and other job roles such as nursery nurse and childminders, are highly trained professionals who play a key role in ensuring that young children learn and develop well and are kept healthy and safe. They work in a range of settings including full day care, children's centres, pre schools, reception classes and as childminders. They may either be working on their own or supervising others to deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements set by Government for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old.

## Knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs)

Knowledge



Skills



Behaviours



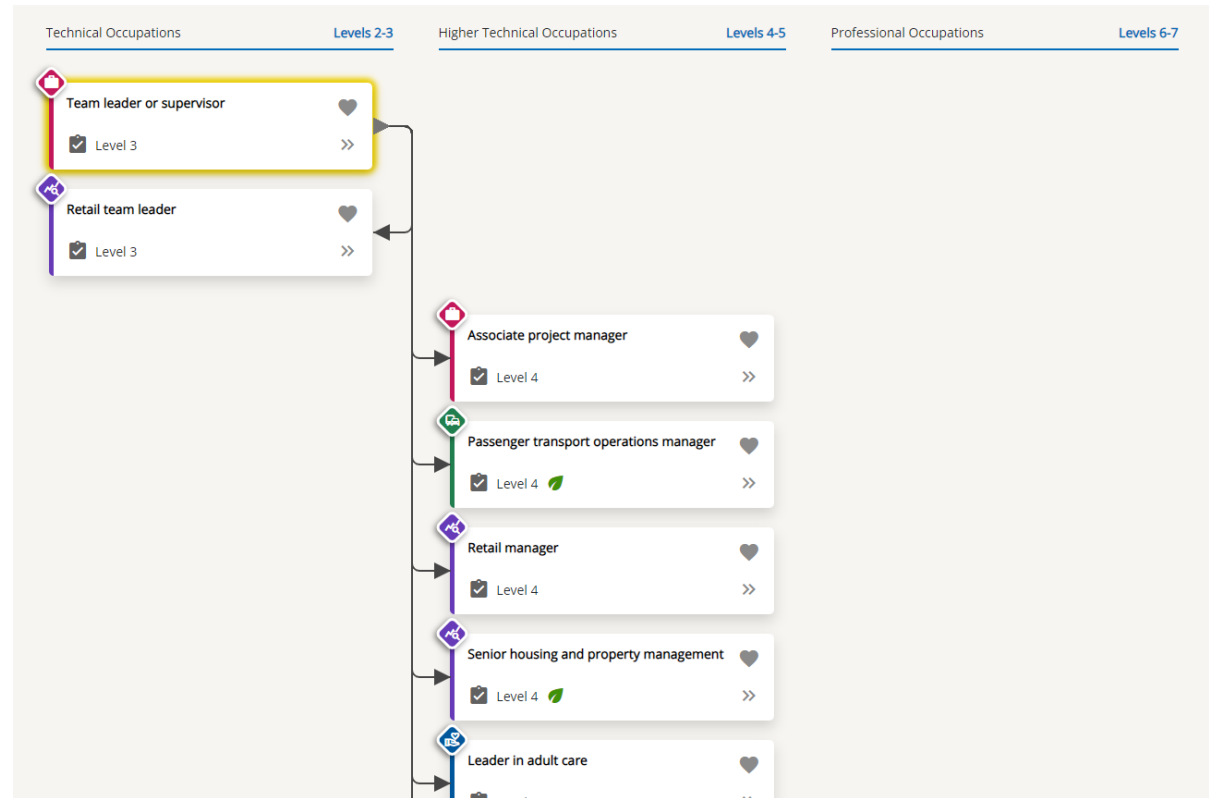
# Occupational Maps

The occupational progression pages support people to **explore potential career options** for those who may want to move into a different job requiring similar knowledge and skills to their existing role.

Progression links have been identified using a range of information which includes:

- comparing the **knowledge and skills statements** across all approved occupations
- **analysis of ILR** (Individualised Learner Record) data to explore real life learner movement trends
- **employer insights**

## Occupational progression profile



Business and administration

Transport and logistics

Care services

Sales, marketing and procurement

# Some apprentice employers



Cabinet Office

**BBC**

British Gas

★ **PRET** ★

**pwc**

**BAE SYSTEMS**

**AIRBUS**

**pets**  
at home



**itv**

**FUJITSU**

**IBM**

**Specsavers**

**gsk**

**NetworkRail**



**ASOS**  
discover fashion online



**BRITISH AIRWAYS**



**Santander**

**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

**sky**



**GREENE KING**  
BURY ST EDMUNDS



**RBS**



# Some apprentice employers



Cabinet Office

**BBC**

British Gas



★ **PRET** ★

**pwc**



**BAE SYSTEMS**

**Why?**

- ❖ Apprenticeship Levy
- ❖ Skills shortages
- ❖ Recruitment and retention
- ❖ Competent, work-ready staff

**AIRBUS**

**IBM**

pets  
at home



**FUJITSU**



itv

gsk

NetworkRail



**Santander**

**RBS**

discover

Competent, work-ready staff

sky

BRITISH AIRWAYS



**GREENE KING**  
BURY ST EDMUNDS



**E**

**JAGUAR**



# Higher and degree apprenticeships

**Work full time and study part-time**



**Learning**



**Salary**



**No debt**



**NUS**



**Experience**



**4-6 Years**



**University fees paid by employer and/or  
government**

**100+ Universities offer apprenticeships**



# The benefits...?



“

Degree apprenticeship graduates from Manchester Metropolitan's Digital and Technology Solutions programme are earning higher annual salaries than graduates from equivalent courses in the UK and universities such as Oxford and Cambridge.

A review of the earnings of the University's first cohort of Digital & Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship, shows **an average annual salary of £39,000 one year after graduating**. This is 46% higher than the average UK computing graduate and 5% higher than graduates from the top five computing courses in the UK.

”



## The benefits...?



“

Apprentice pass rates for the Solicitors' Qualifying Examinations (SQE) are on average 26% higher than the overall pass rate, with solicitor apprentices outperforming those taking the more traditional academic route into law.

”

# Some higher and degree apprenticeships...

Ordnance  
Munitions &  
Explosives  
Professional (BSc)

Solicitor (often  
with LLB)

Digital User  
Experience (UX)  
Professional  
(BA/BSc)

Public Health  
Practitioner (BSc)

Church Minister  
(BA/BTheol)

Construction  
Quantity Surveyor  
(BSc)

Midwife (BSc)

Serious and  
Complex Crime  
Investigator  
(BA/BSc)

Therapeutic  
Radiographer (BSc)

Data Scientist (BSc)

Clinical Trials  
Specialist (BSc)

Dispensing  
Optician

Digital Marketer  
(BA/BSc)

# How do you find an apprenticeship?



Register on Find  
An Apprenticeship



Manage your alerts



Do your research



Contact companies



Search and apply

To find an  
apprenticeship  
visit GOV.UK



Start exploring your next steps

Today's the day to start exploring skills and careers information. You can look at your qualifications and explore online or get career ideas that would suit you.

# Questions and discussion