



Employer Toolkit

Helping small farm businesses
employ an apprentice

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Apprenticeships are a great way to build your farm workforce and make sure they have the skills to be safe and productive.

Apprenticeship approaches vary across the UK. This toolkit is designed to provide straight-forward information about apprenticeships in England, including:

1. **Case study**
2. **What is an apprenticeship?**
3. **How do apprenticeships work?**
4. **The benefits of apprenticeships**
5. **Apprenticeships available in farming**
6. **What are the costs?**
7. **Finding an apprentice**
8. **Finding a training provider**
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Thank you to all the farm businesses that took part in our research allowing us to produce this toolkit.



1. Case study

John Aynsley runs a mixed farm of 1416 hectares on the edge of the North York Moors. We talked to John about his experience of having an apprentice and the value to his business.

What benefits has an apprentice brought to your farm business?

An apprenticeship is a way to recruit a keen, extra pair of hands. They can bring a new energy to the business, without placing too much pressure on cashflow.

The government covers 100% of training costs. They learn to work with other people and become part of the team. After 12 months we saw a clear business return as we were able to get more work done in an average working week. My apprentice comes from a non-farming background and has real enthusiasm and dedication to her work.



Would you recommend hiring an apprentice?

Yes, I have hired two over the last four years and they both remain working on the farm. Apprentices are generally early on in their working lives so don't come to you with any bad habits. They have the right work ethic, having actively chosen a sector which demands hard, practical work in all weather.

How much work does an apprentice do a week?

To start it may seem like not a lot is getting done as they are learning the ropes but after six weeks, I was able to trust the apprentice to complete tasks I set and working over 30 hours a week, they get a lot done.

How did it work releasing your apprentice for off-the-job training?

It was fine as I was able to agree with the training provider a way in which suited me and my farm business.

Who pays them?

As the employer, I'm responsible for paying my apprentice. There is a national minimum wage set by government, however I chose to pay slightly more as I wanted to ensure longevity and attract a good quality of candidates for the role.

How long is the process?

Once the apprenticeship job advert is live, my training provider suggested a 2-week recruitment window, it can sometimes take longer for applications to come in so don't panic. It can vary on the length of time from knowing you want an apprentice to them starting as there are many factors that can slow or speed up the process - I would suggest 3-4 months would be about average to get an apprentice on board. Once they start, the apprenticeship lasts anywhere from 12 – 24 months.



***“An apprentice is
an extra pair of hands, bringing
a youthful energy,
and eagerness to learn
about everyday practical farming”***

What was the most challenging part of taking on an apprentice?

Being a mentor to a young learner is a responsibility which I was worried I wouldn't live up to. I soon realised that I learnt skills on the farm from my father, along with his teaching techniques which I then transferred to my family, who, at points, have been involved in the farm business. Teaching others through practice requires patience and good communication. Personally, I find it very satisfying passing skills on to an apprentice that they will have for the rest of their lives.

What would be your main advice for another farmer thinking of taking on an apprentice?

My advice for getting an apprentice would be to work with the training provider (college) to ensure the apprentice is a good fit. As an employer, you have got to put in as much effort as you expect from the employee. If they think you're just trying to get cheap labour, the relationship is never going to go well. Apprentices need looking after but it is totally worth it.

2. What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a full-time job* (at least 30 hours per week) with a programme of practical training attached. You can recruit an apprentice or put one of your existing employees through an apprenticeship.

An apprentice will be aged 16 or over, employed and paid by the business, and the government pays for the training.

Apprenticeships may be suitable for people who are:

- New starters, early in their career
- Existing employees looking to upskill in their current job
- Someone looking for a career change into farming.

In agriculture, apprenticeships are available for a growing number of job roles, from a general farm worker to an assistant farm manager. Each apprenticeship has an **Apprenticeship Standard** that sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that an apprentice needs to achieve.

Apprenticeships can be a great way to bring new talent to your farm workforce or to upskill your existing employees.

**Apprenticeships can be undertaken part-time, (working a minimum of 16 hours a week), by individuals over the age of 18. This will likely increase the overall time it takes to complete the apprenticeship; however, your training provider will be able to discuss this further with you.*

3. How do apprenticeships work?

Apprenticeships are offered by employers working with an approved training provider, usually a college or university. You employ the apprentice, and most of their training is on the job, but the apprentice must spend the equivalent of 6 hours per week doing 'off-the-job training' with the training provider. This may include classroom lessons, online learning, practical training, industry visits, learning support and time to write assessments.

You work with the training provider to ensure that the training is tailored to the needs of your farm and the apprentice's role. Off-the-job training can be delivered in several ways, for example:

- As part of each working day
- One day per week (day release), or
- Blocks of days, usually a week or more at a time (block release).

Not all the training needs to take place in a college. Some may be done remotely e.g. webinars or e-learning; some may be delivered by a trainer visiting the apprentice's workplace.

The programme is formalised in an individual training plan, which is signed by you, the training provider, and the apprentice.

At the end of the apprenticeship period, your apprentice will undertake an End Point Assessment to check that they have gained all the knowledge, skills and behaviours required.

4. The benefits of apprenticeships



For farm businesses, apprenticeships are a great way to:

- Attract new entrants from a wider pool of people keen to work in agriculture
- Cost-effectively train new or existing employees
- Increase productivity and safer working
- Build a more flexible and reliant workforce
- Help your business adopt new technologies, processes, and innovations
- Improve job satisfaction, morale, and staff retention
- Free up your time to focus on higher value work
- Develop your skills as a mentor for the next generation.



For apprentices they are a great opportunity to:

- Get a start in a sector they have a real passion for
- Do paid work while learning new skills
- Benefit from the knowledge of experienced farmers
- Gain real world experience.



Before taking on an apprentice, ask yourself:

- What new role does your farm business need?
- What benefits would an apprentice bring to my business?
- How will I involve an apprentice in the day-to-day running of my farm?

5. Apprenticeships available in farming

Before you start your search for an apprentice, it is important to think about what kind of role you need them to fill. There are several apprenticeships available that are relevant to farm businesses.

There is a requirement for apprentices to have a standard of literacy and numeracy skills. If they are lacking these skills,

the training provider will work with the apprentice to develop these skills during the apprenticeship programme.

Whilst you are responsible for paying your apprentices salary, government will invest in training for your apprentice. The amount of funding for training varies across the different types of apprenticeships.

Type	Duration	Funding for apprentice training	Key Information
General Farm Worker	12-18 months	£5,000	Level 2 apprenticeships provide basic knowledge and skills for specific jobs and are often suitable for people starting out in the industry with little or no previous experience.
Poultry Worker	12-18 months	£5,000	Level 2 apprenticeships are considered equal to GCSEs.
Poultry Technician	18-24 months	£6,000	Level 3 apprenticeships offer more specialised knowledge and skills, geared towards job roles with a little more responsibility on the farm.
Livestock Unit Technician	18-24 months	£5,000	Level 3 apprenticeships are considered equal to A Levels.
Crop Technician	18-24 months	£15,000	
Assistant Farm Manager	18-24 months	£11,000	Level 4 apprenticeships include some higher level professional and managements skills. They are considered equal to a Foundation Degree.

6. What are the costs?



Wages

An apprentice is an employee of your business, and you pay the apprentice's wages.

From April 2024 the minimum wage for an apprentice aged 16 and over is £6.40 per hour. After completing the first year of their apprenticeship, the minimum wage rises according to age.

- **19 to 20** **£8.60 per hour**
- **21 and over** **£11.44 per hour**

Like the case study on page 4 and 5, many farmers choose to pay above the minimum wage to attract better candidates and encourage retention.



Equipment

As an employer you are also responsible for providing protective clothing and other equipment the apprentice requires to carry out their role safely.



Training

For most farming businesses, those with fewer than 50 employees, the **government will pay 100% of the training costs** for apprentices, up to the funding band maximum.

You access this funding by creating an account on the government's portal. There is no charge to register, and once you have an account you can use it to:

- Access apprenticeship funding and transfer funds to pay the training provider
- Identify and manage training providers
- Advertise to recruit apprentices.

- Minimum wages are reviewed regularly by government, up to date minimum wages rates can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates>.
- For businesses with 50 or more employees, the employer must contribute 5% of the training cost and the government funds the other 95%.

Other funding

You can get an additional £1,000 to support your apprentice if they are one of the following:

- 16 to 18 years old
- 19 to 25 years old with an education, health, and care plan
- 19 to 25 years old and they used to be in care.

This money can be used for costs associated with supporting an apprentice in the workplace. For example, on uniforms, your apprentice's travel, or their salary.

If your apprentice is eligible you don't need to do anything, the training provider will apply for funding and pass it on to you. The first payment of £500 should be paid to the employer by the training provider 90 days after the apprentices start date. The final payment of £500 should be paid at the end of the first year.



7. Finding an apprentice

You can either enrol an existing employee onto an apprenticeship programme or recruit a new employee as an apprentice.

There are various ways to go about recruitment, you could:

- Use your own contacts to let people know about the opportunity
- Use social media to advertise the opportunity
- Contact local schools or colleges
- Get help from a training provider, many will already have people interested in an apprenticeship or have ways of advertising the opportunity
- Advertise the opportunity on the National Apprenticeship Service using your account.



8. Finding a training provider

An apprenticeship requires the involvement of a government approved training provider. Different providers offer different apprenticeship standards and different modes of training delivery. It is important to find a provider that is a good fit for your business.

You can search for approved training providers on the government **Find a Training Provider** page.

9. Hours of work

Full time apprentices should work:

- a minimum of 30 hours a week and a maximum of 40 hours a week.

Apprentices under 18 must not:

- work over 8 hours per day and no more than 40 hours a week, this includes the 6 hours a week spent in 'off-the-job training'.

They should only be asked to exceed this amount when it absolutely cannot be avoided, for example, during lambing season. Any overtime must not impact study time and additional breaks will be required.

Young workers should get a minimum break of 30 minutes after they have worked 4.5 hours. They should also have 12 hours rest periods between shifts, and must have two days off per week.

All apprentices are entitled to 20 days paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays.

10. Apprentice induction

All new employees including apprentices need help with settling in and becoming familiar with your business for them to become a valuable team member.

This induction should include:

- A discussion about their role and objectives so that the apprentice understands what to expect. This discussion should be in line with the written contract of employment.
- An introduction to company procedures, rules, and regulations. Knowing what processes exist and where to go if they have any questions or difficulties. This helps to reassure the apprentice and builds their confidence and encourages them to ask questions if they are unsure.
- Health and safety at work, including emergency and accident reporting procedures – check the apprentice knows how to raise any health and safety concerns and understands why this is important.
- An introduction to work colleagues and the workplace can help them feel part of the team.

The training provider will take the apprentice through the Apprenticeship Agreement and associated training plan early in the programme. This means that you, as the employer, can focus on introducing them to your business

11. What are your responsibilities?

Employer responsibilities

You should be committed to developing your apprentice for a specific job, in addition you will have certain legal responsibilities as an employer.

You must:

- Provide your apprentice with an employment contract for the duration of the apprenticeship. This contract sets out the apprentice's pay, working hours, holiday and sick pay, and their rights under employment law.
- Treat your apprentice like any other employee, subject to the same regulations such as working time, health and safety, equality laws. **The Equality Act 2010** protects apprentices from discrimination, including bullying and harassment, in the workplace.

- Pay the apprentices at least the National Minimum Wage.
- Provide the apprentice with all equipment needed to carry out their role successfully and safely, including all personal protection equipment (PPE) i.e. safety boots, hard hats, waterproofs. The equipment should be available on their first day on the job, so it is important to get any measurements and sizes as soon as an apprentice has been recruited.
- Take responsibility for your apprentice's health and safety. Review your risk assessments before they start work. Consider exposure to noise/vibration/dust, toxic substances. In areas that have greater risk, ensure a full induction is carried out, the apprentice is closely supervised, and any PPE is provided. Be aware of legal age limits and/or mandatory training for operating equipment and machinery (tractors, quad bikes, forklift trucks etc).

Mentor Responsibilities

You are investing your time and effort in your apprentice's development, and they are committing to a long-term period of training. Apprentices are usually motivated and driven to learn and your input as a mentor will be crucial to their success.

As a good mentor you should:

- Provide as many learning opportunities as possible including working with experienced staff
- Be a good listener and give constructive feedback
- Respect the apprentices' individuality and diversity
- Be enthusiastic and positive
- Be patient and inspire the apprentice with your own successes and challenges
- Ensure they have time during their working week for 'off-the-job' training.

12. How will the apprentice be assessed?

All apprentices in England are assessed at the end of their training to check the knowledge, skills and behaviours they have learnt, and to ensure that they can competently perform all aspects of their job role. This is called an End-Point Assessment (EPA).

The EPA is normally arranged by the training provider when both the employer and provider feel the apprentice is ready.

Assessments are different for each apprenticeship but usually include:

- A practical assessment
- An interview and presentation
- Written or multiple-choice knowledge questions.

The EPA is carried out by an independent End-Point Assessment Organisation such as Lantra.

13. Ten steps for taking on an apprentice

1 Identify the job role and decide what kind of apprentice you need.

2 Research and select an approved training provider. They will assist you in designing the training plan and provide ongoing support.

3 Register and create your account with the **Apprenticeship Service**. All apprenticeships in England must be managed through this government online portal.

4 Decide the salary (you must pay your apprentice at least the National Minimum wage) and advertise your apprenticeship. Your training provider can help with advertising but remember you can also advertise the vacancy on the National Apprenticeship Service website by using your account.

5 Shortlist applicants and interview your candidates, ensuring they have the legal right to work in the UK. Bear in mind potential apprentices aren't experienced members of staff. Focus on their potential, their attitude and how they would fit into your team. Offer the role to your chosen candidate.

6 Due diligence:

- If this is your first employee, you must register as an employer with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and get a PAYE reference number and login for the PAYE online.
- You must have employers' liability insurance as soon as you become an employer.
- Check if you need to automatically enrol your apprentice into a workplace pension scheme.

7 Provide your apprentice with an employment contract for the duration of the apprenticeship.

This contract sets out the apprentice's pay, working hours, holiday and sick pay, and their rights under employment law.

8 Work with your training provider to draft an **Apprenticeship Agreement**, which must be signed by you and the apprentice at the start of the apprenticeship, this provides details of:

- The trade the apprentice is being trained for
- The name of the apprenticeship the apprentice is working towards
- The start and end date of the apprenticeship
- The amount of 'off-the-job' training they will receive.

9 The training provider will work with you to draft an **Apprenticeship Training Plan**, this must be signed by you, the apprentice and the training provider. The training plan sets out:

- Expectations, responsibilities and commitment of each party involved
- A plan of training for the duration of the apprenticeship.

10 Provide the apprentice with a supportive environment that encourages their growth and development.

Think about how you will introduce them to your business (induction) and support them throughout their training including regular check-ins and reviews of their performance.

By working in partnership with the training provider, you are more likely to have a structured and successful apprenticeship programme.



14. Further Information

Investment in your own training is also an effective way to strengthen your business. Lantra has a range of training options to support you and your team work safely, productively and sustainably. You can find out more by visiting the **Lantra website**.

Further information relating to each element of the toolkit, including specific weblinks, can be found by visiting the Employers section of the **Lantra website**.

Find out more about employer apprenticeship resources in England by visiting **this link**.



T 024 7669 6996

E careers@lantra.co.uk

W www.lantra.co.uk/employers/apprenticeships

