

National Apprenticeships Service (NAS): Employer engagement Field Force Brief

Introduction

This brief:

- Supports the need to secure significant growth in Apprenticeships volumes through effective promotion to a larger number of employers.
- Complements the national Apprenticeship brand offer/core brief.
- Provides consistency of message.

Who is the brief for?

The primary groups for this brief are: the employer facing staff within NAS and external stakeholders e.g. Train to Gain Skills Brokerage (within Business Link), Sector Skills Councils, Providers, JobcentrePlus.

It is the intention, outside of apprenticeship providers, that the primary route to market will be through the Business Link Brokerage Service.

Purpose of the brief

To raise awareness and understanding of Apprenticeships, the benefits and the support that is available (NAS and Apprenticeships Vacancy Matching Service [AVMS]).

This brief has 5 sections:

- i) Overview/Current context**
- ii) Promotion** to employers, i.e. USP for Apprenticeships
- iii) NAS/AVMS** Emphasis on how NAS/AVMS will add value
- iv) Features of Apprenticeships**
- v) Contact details**

i) Overview of Apprenticeships

- The Government is determined to fully reap the potential from Apprenticeships as a vital component of its nationwide skills drive. Apprenticeships have a central role in Government plans and this is confirmed through the creation of a dedicated and expert service, **National Apprenticeships Service**, to take this forward and deliver.
- Apprenticeships are positioned to provide a practical and desirable step up into higher level skills education.
- Apprenticeships are a key element to ensuring that England is better positioned to win in the global skills race. Substantial growth is needed. The aim is that Apprenticeships will result in supplying more than two million skilled and qualified apprentices into the workforce between 2001/02 to 2020.

- A large number of employers already have the experience that Apprenticeships are a proven way for effectively learning skills and acquiring knowledge that is relevant, appropriate and focussed to the needs of their business.
- **Over 130,000 businesses** are unlocking talent through **Apprenticeships in 80 sectors** including a wide range of new sectors such as tourism, the creative industries, financial services and retail. Apprenticeships are relevant to the world we work and live in today.
- Apprenticeships volumes are growing. Over the past decade, more than double the number of young people and adults have started high-quality Apprenticeships. **100,000** now **completing** each year.
- Apprenticeships enjoy high levels of employer satisfaction.

ii) Benefits to Employers

The challenge is to get employers to see Apprenticeships as part of the solution to their business and skills needs.

UK businesses consider skills shortages and recruitment difficulties a bigger threat to performance than soaring oil prices and declining consumer spending.

Some compelling lines to employers....

- If you want your business to win the skills race, improve its productivity/competitiveness then Apprenticeships are the right choice for you. They provide a comprehensive training package that addresses workforce development needs.
- Help businesses to weather difficult economic times, help tackle skills shortages, contribute to increased productivity.
- Apprentices will make a valuable contribution to improving the performance of your business. They are not peripheral.
- Help avoid skills gaps in the future. Apprenticeships can be a vital and cost-effective way of future proofing skills by countering skills losses through an ageing skilled workforce.

The vast majority of employers felt that Apprentices and Apprenticeships (source: review of research on Apprenticeships, June 2008):

- are **high calibre individuals** who are committed to learning and to progressing.
- are **commercially aware**, are implementers of ideas for **revenue generation**.
- make them more **competitive**.
- are **loyal**. Apprentices are more likely to show loyalty, are more likely to be promoted than to leave your business, and are flexible.
- offer a **progression route** for managers and leaders of the future.
- provide **higher overall productivity**. Apprentices are productive sooner and at a higher level. They are contributors.
- **reduce staff turnover**. Have higher rates of retention because they are more **motivated and satisfied**.
- introduce **new talent, new skill that is suited to and adopts the ethos, values and business aims**.

- produce employees that have a real **understanding of the whole business operation**.
- a reliable way of **providing the skilled workers they need for the future**. This is emphasised where the **supply of skilled employees from Europe is reducing**.
- are more **cost effective** than hiring skilled staff – leading to lower overall training costs and reduced recruitment costs. Employers recover training costs through the productivity of apprentices. They can make a Net positive financial contribution.
- help **fill vacancies more quickly**.

iii) Promotion of NAS and Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service

- **NAS**: New focused leadership for Apprenticeships. It is **national** for the first time but with SW regional presence. Measures to make it easier for employers. The service will be launched nationally from April 2009.
- New systems and structures in place to ensure that Apprenticeships work for you.
- NAS and its field force will be focussed on helping you to make the best use of apprentices and develop the right people with the right skills to suit the current and future needs of your business.
- **Apprenticeship Vacancy Matching Service**: For the first time vacancies are opened up to applicants from across the country. No cost to the employer. Quick and easy to access potential recruits. Operational from January 2009.
- By working with existing brokers and training providers, the NAS will not only seek to increase the number of Apprenticeships made with employers but also work to reduce the number of contacts made with employers about Apprenticeships.

iv) Features of Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeships are a mixture of on and off the job training offered through a “framework”. Combination of theoretical and applied knowledge, technical competence and wider skills for employment AND all part of a real job. They have been designed by employers for employers.
- Provide specialist intermediate skills. ‘Apprenticeships’, equivalent to 5 x GCSE level A* - C grades. ‘Advanced Apprenticeships’, equivalent to 2 x A-levels.
- Practically relevant and recognised qualifications. Designed by employers for employers and therefore tailored to meet the needs of each specific sector.
- Employers can work with training providers and Sector Skills Councils to develop Apprenticeship frameworks that are fit for purpose.
- Apprenticeships are open to **all** age groups, Apprenticeships are available for anyone aged 16 – 65 in England.

- LSC makes a substantial contribution to the costs of training for those aged 16 – 19, and pays 50 percent of the 16 – 19 rate for those aged 20 and above. There is no cap on the money available, provided employers' use an LSC approved training provider or set up a contract themselves. In most instances funding goes to the training provider.
- Apprentices are employees and are paid (waged/salaried). There is an absolute minimum wage of £95/week for a full time employee. However, actual pay rates vary between sectors and employers pay practice should be positioned so as to attract and retrain calibre candidates and employees. The average weekly pay across sectors in 2007 was £170 (range £109 - £210)

v) Information and advice for employers. Contact details

- Employers wanting to find out more about how Apprenticeships can help their business, how they can get involved and find out what support exists should contact: **Train to Gain Skills Brokerage Service on 08456 047047, or visit the website www.traintogain.gov.uk**
- Employers can also call the **national Apprenticeships helpline on 0800 0150 400 or visit the website www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Employers.aspx**