

TOP TIPS FOR PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

The following 'top tips' have been developed following a review of best practice emerging from the case studies. They are aimed at public sector organisations that are planning and developing their apprenticeship programmes, but may have resonance for other employers planning their apprenticeship offer.

1. Set aside resource for designing and delivering your apprenticeship offer

Having a central point of contact for coordinating the design and delivery of your apprenticeship offer can be invaluable. This person can be a source of knowledge on apprenticeship policy and practice, liaise with senior staff to plan the organisation's approach to apprenticeships, work with wider staff to identify opportunities for apprenticeships, develop systems and processes for apprenticeships in the organisation and support for apprentices, and communicate about the apprenticeship opportunities to staff more generally.

Public sector organisations that have done this have found this to be a full time, but highly important and useful role.

2. Be creative in your planning

There are a wide range of frameworks and standards available for apprenticeships at a variety of levels. Apprentices are not just for entry-level staff and may offer an opportunity for developing existing staff.

Public sector organisations are using apprenticeships in a range of ways, including to develop the leadership and management skills of existing staff, and establishing progression pathways for career starters e.g. from apprentice healthcare assistant to qualified nurse.

3. Make links to other organisational policies and targets

When planning your apprenticeships consider how these may be utilised to help you achieve other organisational aims or targets, and help you deliver a better service.

Public sector organisations that have had apprentices have found this can help contribute to reducing youth local unemployment and make their workforce more diverse.

4. Share information at all levels

Staff across your organisation may either have an opportunity for an apprentice in their team, line manage an apprentice, or benefit from being an apprentice themselves. By making all staff aware of these potential opportunities, more people will come forward to explore the options.

Public sector organisations that have existing apprentices are finding that information sharing can also be helpful in any 'myth-busting' about apprenticeships, which can be helpful in encouraging interest in the opportunities.

5. Work with partners

The apprenticeship levy and public sector target will affect many organisations in your sector and local area. There are often opportunities at a local level to share best practice and raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships.

Public sector organisations have benefited from speaking to local employers and other organisations in their sector to share experiences of apprenticeships and encourage others to use them.

6. Make best use of learning provider support

Learning providers can offer a wide range of support to employers. When conducting procurement you may want to consider identifying any additional support you would like e.g. support with recruitment, on-site training options, or advice on the changing apprenticeship system.

Public sector organisations that have accessed wider provider support have noted that this has helped to relieve some of the administrative burden on them and make the best use of staff time.

7. Explore non-traditional recruitment approaches

Apprenticeships offer an opportunity to recruit a diverse range of people into your organisation. To ensure your organisation makes the most of this opportunity and engages high quality apprentices, consider the use of non-traditional recruitment approaches such as strengths-based recruitment or assessment days.

Public sector organisations that have used non-traditional recruitment approaches have found these have identified high quality apprentices by placing less emphasis on experience and more on potential.

8. Provide support for apprentices

For many apprentices it may be their first experience of working in a large organisation, or their first experience of working. To ensure they have a high quality experience and do not leave the programme early, consider what additional support they might need or benefit from e.g. including an induction on the role of apprentices in your organisation, offering a mentor programme, or providing support with permanent job applications.

Public sector organisations that have provided tailored support for apprentices in their organisations have found that this improves the retention-rate of apprentices and promotes a more positive experience.

9. Consider the practicalities

Speak with line managers and others who will work directly with apprentices to consider the day-to-day practicalities of employing them. For some public sector organisations consideration of uniforms, shift patterns and hours worked will be crucial.

Public sector organisations that have linked with wider staff to explore some of the day-to-day practicalities have found this has been a good way of troubleshooting any potential challenges when the apprentice starts.

10. Promote the benefits of apprenticeships

For staff it is often important to understand that there is buy-in to apprenticeships at all levels of the organisation so they feel supported and able to support others. Consider how you communicate the benefits of apprenticeships at all levels and how your senior management engage with them to set the tone.

Public sector organisations with successful apprenticeship programmes have found buy-in from staff at senior levels to be a critical success factor. This senior support has cascaded through the organisation and ensured they have sufficient resources and support to plan and deliver their programmes.