



**NFCC**

National Fire  
Chiefs Council

# People

## Apprenticeship toolkit

Developed and maintained by the NFCC

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## How to use this toolkit

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New apprenticeships standards have replaced the previous apprenticeship frameworks across all sectors. They have been developed in conjunction with National Operational Guidance and National Occupational Standards.

There are five fire specific apprenticeship standards available for use and one under development, along with many other apprenticeships for other occupational sectors that form part of a FRS workforce.

This toolkit will support senior staff, training managers and other FRS strategists to understand what is required of their service in order to deliver apprenticeships, why apprenticeships are valuable to a modern service, and how to establish an apprenticeship programme to suit the needs of each individual service. An apprenticeship programme embedded across different services will increase the co-operation of interservice transfers and efficiency and sustainability of staff training, mobility and recruitment.

The toolkit is not a set of rules but a guide to aid decision making and planning, with signposts to relevant websites for additional details.

Senior FRS managers, training managers and trainers will find the toolkit useful to help develop and deliver appropriate apprenticeships for staff.

## Key questions

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### Do you have buy-in from your senior management team?

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A successful and sustainable apprenticeship programme needs to be championed by the senior management team of the service. It is critical to the future travel of a service, and how it responds to local needs and meets the objectives of the IRMP.

Senior leaders need to:

- Analyse current and future staffing skill needs to respond to IRMP
- Prioritise training needs to meet IRMP – for example, ask whether local needs are to be met



- with firefighters or community safety advisers, or a combination of both
- Assess past performance in terms of delivery of training, including retention rates, costs and completion of courses
  - Assess infrastructure to meet training needs, including existing staff, equipment, premises, and facilities
  - Assess whether systems are in place to administer learning and delivery, including the management of training contracts, quality assurance of training provision and support to staff
  - Understand that staff support includes attracting internal and external apprentice candidates, sign posting courses, providing pastoral and other support during training and ensuring training needs are met
  - Understand gaps in training provision and ability which can be filled by professional training providers
  - Analyse whether roles are clearly established and linked to apprenticeships for promotion
  - Link apprenticeships to succession planning, including career pathways

## Have you developed a strategy and vision?

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Do you have a strategy and vision for your apprenticeship programme and is this part of the wider corporate strategy of your service? By embedding the strategy, it makes it clear to staff and your local communities that your people are valued. The [NFCC People Programme Apprenticeship Strategy](#) can help services to formulate your own strategy and vision.

## Why do you want to run apprenticeships?

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The government describes an apprenticeship as a real job with an industry recognised training programme.

For the fire and rescue service, this also means staff can make progress in their careers confident that their training and qualifications will be recognised by different services and those services will be confident in the quality of transferring staff who will come equipped with the right skills, knowledge and experience.

Fire specific apprenticeships are an opportunity to develop the skills of your workforce and to provide people from all backgrounds with the opportunity to obtain both job-specific and transferable skills that will contribute to their achievement in the workplace.



A programme brings benefits to your service and your local communities:

1. Social return on investment – recruiting apprentices from the local community benefits both the community and the local service, enhancing the workforce profile and improving diversity.
2. Economic efficiencies for services – utilising the national apprenticeship standards could result in cost reductions for services and lead to workforce reforms.
3. Clear career pathway – attracting individuals from a more diverse range of cultures, selected by suitability and on merit for the roles you have, and with clear routes for career progression. This enables the services to become employers of choice.
4. Consistent approach – collaborating to develop national apprenticeship standards brings about consistency in training approaches and requirements of staff. Apprentices can be assured that by following the national apprenticeship standards their skills, knowledge and experience will be recognised across the country, should they wish to transfer. Use of apprenticeships saves services time, effort, and money for both development and procurement, and enables easier staff mobility.
5. Raising professional standards within the sector – to help apprentices and staff develop strong professional capabilities and be part of a highly capable, skilled and engaged fire and rescue service. This includes developing profession-oriented apprenticeships which are fire specific.
6. Cultural change – to ensure that apprenticeships are a key component of an inclusive fire and rescue service that reflects the society it serves. Focusing on the transferable skills and consistency in the way services deliver apprenticeships will help to embrace diversity within the workforce. Working together will attract the right individuals based on merit, and potentially from a more diverse range of cultures who are right for the job.
7. Improved employee engagement and productivity - Investing in apprenticeship training has a positive effect on employee engagement and productivity, demonstrating a willingness to develop employees, which in turn increases staff retention and can provide a foundation for succession and career pathways supporting existing staff into specialists roles and supporting ongoing staff development to progress into a higher level apprenticeship for management roles.

Apprenticeship programmes will also support your service to upskill and retrain current employees to help individuals and the service to meet occupational needs.

## Planning and delivery

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## Provider and partnership status

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Each service will need to decide whether to deliver the apprenticeship training internally or use the support of external providers. Individual organisations, including fire and rescue services, can provide their own apprenticeship programmes or offer apprenticeships to external organisations provided they meet specific criteria laid down by the Institute of Apprenticeships.

There are 3 types of apprenticeship training provider on the register of apprenticeship training providers:

### **Main provider**

Services may prefer, and benefit from, the use of external apprenticeship training providers to deliver the required apprenticeship training. The main provider must be registered with the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP) in order to deliver the training.

Main providers enter into contracts with employers that use the apprenticeship service to pay for apprenticeship training or hold a contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to deliver to employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy. If your service is registered as a main provider, you will undertake training to your own staff and to staff employed by others.

Main providers are experienced in delivering internally and to external organisations, and will have the infrastructure, resources, specialist knowledge and experience to deliver training, support and guidance to a potentially large number of contracted apprentices and organisations.

### **Employer provider**

Employer providers train their own employees or those of connected companies and use the apprenticeship service to pay for the apprenticeship training. As an employer provider you will undertake 100% of the training required for just your own staff, or you can provide part of the training required to your own staff and contract an external approved training provider to deliver the rest.

Delivering your own apprenticeship programmes provides greater ownership so that you can tailor the programme to meet the needs of your service and align with other business processes. It provides the opportunity to use your own equipment, facilities and training staff.

### **Subcontractors**

Supporting providers, or subcontractors, have subcontracts with main providers to enhance apprenticeship training for employers and their apprentices. A subcontractor must be registered as an apprenticeship training provider and could be contracted to deliver specialist or niche



training to a limited number of apprentices, working with a partner organisation.

To work with a main training provider services should be registered as a subcontractor.

Subcontractors are equipped to deal with higher numbers of apprenticeship candidates and have sufficient resources to deliver an employer led apprenticeship.

## Apprenticeship Standards

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There are currently six fire specific apprenticeships standards designed by fire services in the UK for operational staff:

- [Operational Firefighter](#) - Tackling fires and other emergencies
- [Business Fire Safety Adviser](#) - Working with businesses to help protect their premises from fire.
- [Community Safety Adviser](#) - Working within local communities providing life-improving advice, guidance and interventions
- [Emergency Service Contact Handling](#) - Dealing with emergency calls
- [Fire Safety Inspector](#) - Assessing the level of fire safety in built environments
- [Fire Engineer](#) - Providing specialist, fire-related information across the built environment to protect people and property from the destructive effects of fire by applying science and engineering principles

In addition to these programmes for operational staff, there are apprenticeships available at the Institute for

Apprenticeships & Technical Education for non-operational staff.

The six apprenticeships for fire service staff are also at different educational levels, equivalent to school and university award qualifications:

<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Equivalent Level (Eng and Wales)</b>
Operational Firefighter	Advanced	3	A level
Business Fire Safety Adviser	Advanced	3	A level
Community Safety Adviser	Advanced	3	A level



<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Equivalent Level (Eng and Wales)</b>
Emergency Service Contact Handling	Advanced	3	A level
Fire Safety Inspector	Higher	4,5,6,7	Foundation degree and above
Fire Safety Engineer (Degree)	Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

Apprenticeships in Scotland are mapped to the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF).

## Programme duration

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Apprenticeships should last for at least a year, with most fire service apprenticeships taking up to 24 months:

<b>Apprenticeship</b>	<b>Typical duration</b>
Operational Firefighter	24 months
Business Fire Safety Adviser	24 months
Community Safety Adviser	12 to 18 months
Emergency Service Contact Handling	12 months
Fire Safety Inspector	24 months
Fire Safety Engineer	60 months

## Occupational profiles

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Occupational profiles provide an overview of the occupation, typical job titles, and a set of duties. Each of the occupational profiles for the trailblazer apprenticeships is available on the [Institute for Apprenticeships website](#).

## Costs

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### Procurement framework

The NFCC agreed to work with YPO (Yorkshire Procurement Office), who are in a position to provide a fluid dynamic framework with the resources and infrastructure required. The framework in place can provide UK wide, regional and local opportunities, and can provide standard templates and guidance for use by Fire and Rescue Services. The framework can also support collaboration across different FRs, as and when appropriate.

It is free to register with YPO as a supplier and work is ongoing towards all RoATP providers among fire services to get listed on the YPO framework.

Services with an account can access training providers through the [YPO procurement framework for apprenticeships and associated training](#) from a range of local and national suppliers.

The fire sector apprenticeships are each on the portal:

- [Operational Firefighter](#)
- [Business Fire Safety Adviser](#)
- [Community Safety Adviser](#)
- [Emergency Service Contact Handling](#)
- [Fire Safety Inspector](#)
- Fire Engineer

### The Levy

Larger organisations with an annual payroll of over £3 million must pay the [apprenticeship levy](#) each month, charged at 0.5% of the annual pay bill, which can be offset by training and assessing apprentices. The government will top up the funds in an [employer account](#) by 10%, if the employer does not have enough in the account to meet the costs of a specific apprenticeship, up to the maximum funding band allocation for that programme.

Employers with a smaller wage bill who do not pay the levy only contribute 5% of the costs towards training and assessing an apprentice, with the government paying the rest of the costs up to the funding band maximum. Any costs over the funding bands below will be paid by the employer.



## Funding bands

Each apprenticeship programme is allocated to one of 30 funding bands, which range from £1,500 to £27,000, with the upper limit setting the maximum amount an employer paying the levy can use towards an individual apprenticeship.

Below are the funding bands in 2020 for the fire standards, subject to review and revision:

Operational Firefighter	£14,000
Business Fire Safety Adviser	£2,500
Community Safety Adviser	£3,500
Emergency Service Contact Handling	£9,000
Fire Safety Inspector	£8,000
Fire Engineer	TBC with course in development

[Details about funding bands from the Institute for Apprentices](#)

## Role of the employer

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The employer has to provide a genuine job with a contract of employment long enough to support the apprentice to complete their apprenticeship, pay their wages, and provide the knowledge, skills and behaviour to achieve the apprenticeship. Apprenticeships can also be used for existing staff to support their training development.

## Learner support

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As an employer, you will be providing on-the-job training and supervision. Apprentices need to spend 20% of their working contracted hours completing [off-the-job training](#), which can be delivered in a variety of ways to suit the learner, service, and the programme, including:

- Online



- In the workplace
- With a college or other training provider

The expectation of off-the-job training is that it will be learning outside of a normal part of the job, such as undertaking specific training courses to meet the technical knowledge, skills and behaviours required for the apprenticeship.

Training can be delivered with the frequency to suit the apprentice, such as one day per week, part of a working day, or in specific blocks of time.

## Key Requirements

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### **Apprenticeship agreement**

Employers must sign an apprenticeship agreement with the apprentice, which details how long they will be employed, the training they will receive, their working conditions, and the qualifications they are working towards.

[A template agreement is available on the government website.](#)

### **Apprenticeship commitment statement**

Employers must sign an [apprenticeship commitment statement](#) with the apprentice and the training provider, which details the planned content and schedule of training, expectations and offer of the employer, training organisation and the apprentice, and how to resolve queries or complaints.

### **Employer Account**

Employers will need to create an [employer account](#) on the government apprenticeship website to manage apprenticeship training and costs. The employer account facilitates the financial management of apprenticeships, including gaining access to government funding and making payments to providers, in addition to approving training costs. The account also helps to manage the wider training relationship with providers, such as allocating tasks and providing feedback. [Education and Skills Funding Agency \(ESFA\)](#) stipulate the funding rules for apprenticeship which will require close monitoring to ensure compliance.

### **Quality Assurance**

Employers will need to ensure that they have processes in place to monitor the quality of their apprenticeship provision including the creation of a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality



Improvement Plan (QIP).

Ofsted requirements will need to be met as detailed in the [Education Inspection Framework \(EIF\)](#) and [Further Education and Skills Inspection Handbook](#) which sets standards for training providers as well as employer providers.

Main providers and employer providers will need ensure adequate resources are available to monitor the progress of apprentices and the quality of training.

## Assessment

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### Gateways

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The end of the training period is the [gateway](#) when the employer, in consultation with the training provider, believes the apprentice is ready to demonstrate occupational competence during the end-point assessment.

For each trailblazer apprenticeship there are specific mandatory requirements, outlined in the apprentice's assessment plan. These may include language and maths proficiency and may include a portfolio of evidence demonstrating that the apprentice is consistently working at or above the occupational standard.

### End point assessment (EPA)

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When the apprentice has passed the EPA gateway they can complete the EPA. The EPA will typically take three months to a year to complete, depending on the complexity of the EPA, and may include different assessment methods, including:

- Practical assessment
- Interview or discussion
- A project
- Written and/or multiple-choice tests
- A presentation
- Observation



If an apprentice fails any element of the assessment, they only need to re-sit that element within the allotted time of the EPA. If an apprentice does not complete the EPA within the allotted time, they will need to retake the whole EPA from the beginning. The EPA should be an independent assessment of the apprentice's competence conducted by an independent assessor on the [Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations \(RoEPAO\)](#).

The End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) will be responsible for judging the overall competence of the apprenticeship and for marking the written report. The EPAO will coordinate and conduct the workplace observation and the structured discussion.

## Certification

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When an apprentice has successfully completed their programme and passed the EPA, they will be awarded a certificate.

### Award grades

There are two successful award grades for the trailblazer apprenticeships – pass or distinction – with different pass marks depending on which apprenticeship the candidate is taking. Some apprenticeships also lead to professional recognition by an authorised body, with the following awards eligible for professional registration at the following levels:

Apprenticeship	Recognition
Operational Firefighter	Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) at Technician (TIFireE) level
Fire Safety Inspector	Institution for Fire Engineers (IFE) Membership level
Fire Safety Engineer	Institution for Fire Engineers (IFE) Associate /Member level (depending on experience)

## Considerations for on-call apprentices

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If your service has an on-call workforce, you can consider using the Operational Firefighter



Standard to train new recruits using the funds in your digital apprenticeship service to subsidise the training and assessment costs.

## Requirements

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The NFCC have agreed with the government that fire services who wish to use the apprenticeship make sure the following are adhered to:

1. Each fire service would conduct an assessment to ascertain if on-call apprenticeships are suitable for their organisation on a station by station basis
2. Fire services should carry out an [equality impact assessment](#) to aid their decision regarding on-call apprenticeships
3. Each fire service would use their own selection criteria for determining which recruits may be suitable to employ as a firefighter apprentice
4. Apprentice on-call firefighters must be issued with both a contract of employment and apprenticeship agreement
5. Apprentices to be issued with an individual learning plan
6. The fire service will need to agree with the on-call firefighter apprentice what level of cover they could provide. This information will assist in determining the length of the apprenticeship
7. Only positive employment hours will count towards the required on and off the job training and development. On-Call availability hours will not be eligible.
8. Employers should ensure that the manager, the apprentice and training provider review progress on a regular basis. This could be in the form of an annual performance review, monthly 1-2-1 with the manager, together with a quarterly meeting with the apprentices' skills coach. A record of the event should be prepared, setting out future training and development needs together with specific outcomes to be achieved in a given timescale.
9. The apprenticeship for an on-call firefighter should be as set out in these guidance notes. Any deviation from this model would need to be agreed by the sector and the government.

## On-call funding

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Provided that an on-call apprenticeship follows [set principles](#) it can also be funded through the employer account, and it is assumed that the on-call apprenticeship will last between 24-48 months depending on the operational needs of the station that the apprentice is based at, accredited prior learning, incidents, and other activities attended.



## Next steps

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These initial awards will enable the qualified employee to work in their specific occupation, but could also support the service or develop their career in other areas working with blue light partners, such as the police or related career pathways in youth justice, health and housing, and so on. Further training and qualifications could lead to wider career pathways within fire and rescue services and across UK industry, such as Fire Safety Risk Assessor, Fire Safety Inspector, Fire Risk Manager and Fire Engineer.

## Useful links

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[Government apprenticeship search](#)

[The apprenticeship technical funding guide](#)

[Institute for Apprentices & Technical Education occupation search](#)

[Register of apprenticeship training providers \(RoATP\)](#)

[Apprenticeship levy](#)

[Employer account](#)

[Template apprenticeship agreement](#)

[Template commitment statement and guidance](#)

[Information about the Gateway](#)

[Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations \(RoEPAO\)](#)